Hafa Adai!

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One of victims in Puerto Rico crash sues Artman, driver. PAGE 3

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Vaccination mandatory for Executive Branch workers

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Gov. Ralph DLG Torres has made it mandatory for all Executive Branch employees to be vaccinated for COVID-10, as a means to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus and to ensure a healthy and safe work environment.

» Staff of semi-autonomous agencies also included
» 'Exclusion may ultimately mean termination'

In a directive Thursday, Torres said this policy applies also to semi-autonomous agencies and entities.

The same directive does not apply to other branches of government and au-

See VACCINATION on Page 4

Kammer Beach on Tinian is now called the Jones Beach, named after businessman Kenneth Thomas Jones Jr. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Tinian beach park named after Kenneth Thomas Jones Jr.

By BEA CABRERA
beacabrerasaipan@gmail.com
CORRESPONDENT

Kammer Beach on Tinian is now called Jones Beach, in honor of the life and contributions of late businessman Kenneth Thomas Jones Jr., who built a cattle ranch and farm on Tinian in the '60s to raise crops on 7,500 acres of land that he called "Bar K Ranch."

The Tinian and Aguiguan municipal government and legislative delegation officially renamed the beach last week, in time for the opening of the Triple J-owned Tinian Western Lodge and its Bar-K-Diner and Drive-In.

Jones was already an established businessman in Guam and Saipan in the '60s when he extended his vision to Tinian, providing not just employment opportunities to its people but also creating a bustling economy that gave Tinian the reputation of being the "bread basket of the Marianas."

Jones' wife, Elaine Cruz

See TINIAN on Page 4

2,898 apply for NMI permanent residency

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

» Sablan says 29 have been approved, 8 are denied, 2,861 are still waiting

Of the 2,898 who applied for the CNMI Permanent Resident Status that was created under U.S. Public Law 116-24, so far a total of 29 have been approved and eight applications have been denied.

In his e-kilili newsletter over the weekend, Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (Ind-MP) said this leaves 2,861 people who are still

See 2,898 on Page 4

8 test positive for COVID-19

By JUSTINE NAUTA
justine_nauta@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The CNMI saw its highest number of single-day recorded cases of COVID-19 since March 28, 2020, with eight people testing positive for the coronavirus yesterday.

According to the Common-

See COVID-19 on Page 4

COMMUNITY VULNERABILITY

LEGEND:
- **Red:** Least safe
- **Orange**
- **Yellow**
- **Blue**
- **Green:** Safest

Source: Office of the Governor

AT A GLANCE

As of 7pm, Feb. 21, 2021

GUAM	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	7,705	15	7,720
Recovered	7,528	0	7,528
Active	47	15	62
Deaths	130	0	130
Cumulative Number of Persons Tested			122,982

SAIPAN	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	135	8	143
Traced via Travel Screening	109	8	117
Traced via Community Screening	26	0	26
Deaths	2	0	2
Cumulative Number of Persons Tested			26,131*
Days since last community transmission			186

VACCINATIONS IN THE CNMI

Saipan:	Tinian:	Rota:
Dose 1: 8,658	Dose 1: 273	Dose 1: 363
Dose 2: 6,105	Dose 2: 128	Dose 2:

*Total count includes the number of persons tested on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. With guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CHCC has opted not to report active and recovered cases.

Source: Joint Information Center - Guam, Commonwealth Healthcare Corp.

INSIDE

LOCAL
Starting today, traffic flow in Western Garapan will be changed to add more one-way streets.
PAGE 5

BUSINESS
Casa Décor is having a sale: most items are 20% off and select items are at 30-40% off.
PAGE 12

LIFE & STYLE
Kim Kardashian West files for divorce from Kanye West after 6 1/2 years of marriage.
PAGE 15

SCAN ME WITH A COMPATIBLE QR READER TO KEEP UPDATED ON ALL THE LATEST NEWS.

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Local

Seven construction workers' suit vs MCC is dismissed

By KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA
Kimberly_bautista@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

At the request of the complainants, the U.S. District Court for the NMI dismissed the lawsuit filed by seven construction workers against MCC International Saipan Ltd. Co. last week, after U.S. District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Ramona Manglona found the parties' stipulation of dismissal proper.

According to the stipulation, MCC International Saipan Ltd. Co. and the seven construction workers who sued them for forced labor and human trafficking allegations have reached a settlement. The court will retain jurisdiction over the case to enforce the settlement agreement.

The stipulation was signed by attorney Robert T. Torres who represents MCC International, and attorneys Bruce Berline and Aaron Halegua who represent the seven workers: Tianming Wang, Dong Han, Yongjun Meng, Liangcai Sun, Youli Wang, Qingchun Xu, and Duxin Yan.

According to court documents, the workers were seeking $3.86 million in compensatory damages and $7.72 million in punitive damages.

Aside from MCC, the workers also sued Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC and its former subcontractor, Gold Mantis Construction Decoration (CNMI).

Gold Mantis told the court early last month that it had reached a settlement with the plaintiffs.

As for IPI, which is represented by attorney Michael Dotts, the court has ordered its chairwoman Cui Li Jie to explain in writing why she should not be jailed for not complying with a subpoena.

House minority bloc offers 20 bills

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The House of Representatives minority bloc introduced 20 bills, while the majority bloc filed three bills during the second day of the House's first regular session at the House chamber Friday afternoon.

At the session, House Speaker Edmund S. Villagomez (Ind-Saipan) assigned the bills to committees. Lawmakers also discussed rules and procedures for the House that was left on calendar.

In an interview after the session, minority bloc spokesperson Rep. Angel A. Demapan (R-Saipan) said he is pleased to report that of 23 bills introduced, 20 came from their bloc.

"I think that's a demonstration of our commitment to the community," Demapan said.

He said these 20 bills comes amid their three village restoration projects that had just been completed. "I think it really speaks volume of the minority bloc's continued

See HOUSE on Page 4

OGM seeks more applicants for fishing grant

By JUSTINE NAUTA
justine_nauta@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Even with 437 applicants already, the Office of Grants Management is still looking for more fishermen to apply for financial aid provided under the Coronavirus Aid, Recovery, and Economic Security Act for commercial fishermen and subsistence fishermen in the CNMI.

In an interview with OGA administrator Epiphanio Cabrera Jr., he said he wants all fishermen to apply. "We see a lot of fishermen over the weekend that are still [fishing], who have probably fished in the past, and they probably qualify but we only received about 437 applications, and the deadline for applications is March 1," said Cabrera.

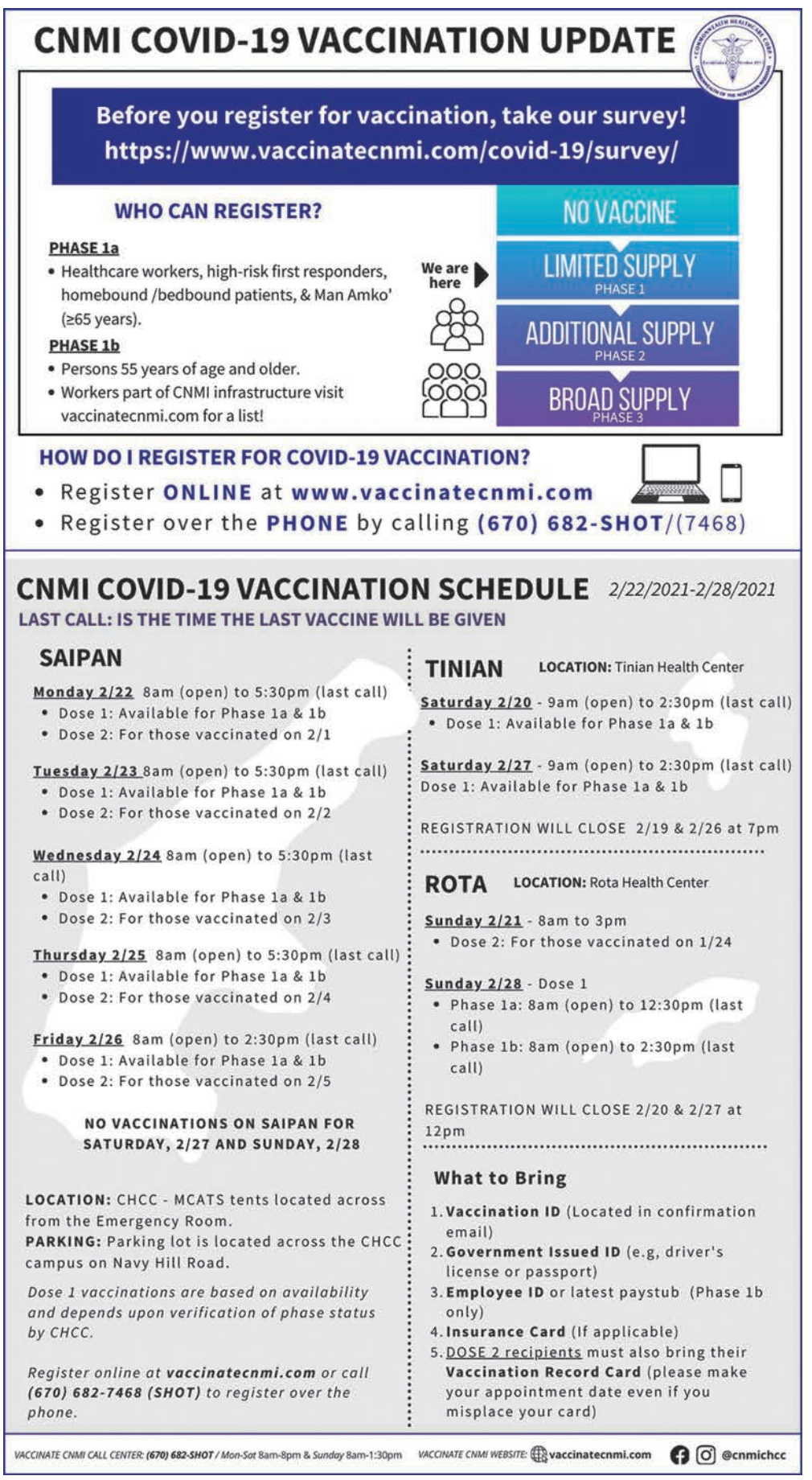
It was learned that fishermen can receive between $50 to $1,500 per applicant, depending on the allocation of the funding resource. The minimum requirement is for a fisherman to submit the application and sign the affidavit stating that their fishing livelihood has been adversely affected by COVID-19. Both commercial and recreational fishermen are allowed to apply. The fisherman has to be 18 years or older to apply for the grant.

"If you have a fishing rod or you did fish during that time or you use *talaya* or go diving for fishing and is affected, and you were affected during the pandemic, you can qualify," said Cabrera. *Talaya* is a traditional Chamorro fishing method that involves a casting net for fishing.

Cabrera said they are looking to help at least 2,000 fishermen in all but currently only have 437 applicants.

Cabrera assured that even foreign workers—worker under the CNMI-Only Transitional Workers program—can apply for the grant. To qualify, CW workers must be in the fishing industry and are here legally or have a current approved immigration status.

The CNMI was allocated $980,000 for this program.


CNMI COVID-19 VACCINATION UPDATE
Before you register for vaccination, take our survey!
https://www.vaccinatecnmi.com/covid-19/survey/
WHO CAN REGISTER?
PHASE 1a
• Healthcare workers, high-risk first responders, homebound /bedbound patients, & Man Amko' (≥65 years).
PHASE 1b
• Persons 55 years of age and older.
• Workers part of CNMI infrastructure visit vaccinatecnmi.com for a list!
We are here
NO VACCINE
LIMITED SUPPLY PHASE 1
ADDITIONAL SUPPLY PHASE 2
BROAD SUPPLY PHASE 3
HOW DO I REGISTER FOR COVID-19 VACCINATION?
• Register ONLINE at www.vaccinatecnmi.com
• Register over the PHONE by calling (670) 682-SHOT/(7468)
CNMI COVID-19 VACCINATION SCHEDULE 2/22/2021-2/28/2021
LAST CALL: IS THE TIME THE LAST VACCINE WILL BE GIVEN
SAIPAN
Monday 2/22 8am (open) to 5:30pm (last call)
• Dose 1: Available for Phase 1a & 1b
• Dose 2: For those vaccinated on 2/1
Tuesday 2/23 8am (open) to 5:30pm (last call)
• Dose 1: Available for Phase 1a & 1b
• Dose 2: For those vaccinated on 2/2
Wednesday 2/24 8am (open) to 5:30pm (last call)
• Dose 1: Available for Phase 1a & 1b
• Dose 2: For those vaccinated on 2/3
Thursday 2/25 8am (open) to 5:30pm (last call)
• Dose 1: Available for Phase 1a & 1b
• Dose 2: For those vaccinated on 2/4
Friday 2/26 8am (open) to 2:30pm (last call)
• Dose 1: Available for Phase 1a & 1b
• Dose 2: For those vaccinated on 2/5
NO VACCINATIONS ON SAIPAN FOR SATURDAY, 2/27 AND SUNDAY, 2/28
LOCATION: CHCC - MCATS tents located across from the Emergency Room.
PARKING: Parking lot is located across the CHCC campus on Navy Hill Road.
Dose 1 vaccinations are based on availability and depends upon verification of phase status by CHCC.
Register online at vaccinatecnmi.com or call (670) 682-7468 (SHOT) to register over the phone.
TINIAN LOCATION: Tinian Health Center
Saturday 2/20 - 9am (open) to 2:30pm (last call)
• Dose 1: Available for Phase 1a & 1b
Saturday 2/27 - 9am (open) to 2:30pm (last call)
Dose 1: Available for Phase 1a & 1b
REGISTRATION WILL CLOSE 2/19 & 2/26 at 7pm
ROTA LOCATION: Rota Health Center
Sunday 2/21 - 8am to 3pm
• Dose 2: For those vaccinated on 1/24
Sunday 2/28 - Dose 1
• Phase 1a: 8am (open) to 12:30pm (last call)
• Phase 1b: 8am (open) to 2:30pm (last call)
REGISTRATION WILL CLOSE 2/20 & 2/27 at 12pm
What to Bring
1. Vaccination ID (Located in confirmation email)
2. Government Issued ID (e.g, driver's license or passport)
3. Employee ID or latest paystub (Phase 1b only)
4. Insurance Card (If applicable)
5. DOSE 2 recipients must also bring their Vaccination Record Card (please make your appointment date even if you misplace your card)
VACCINATE CNMI CALL CENTER: (670) 682-SHOT / Mon-Sat 8am-8pm & Sunday 8am-1:30pm
VACCINATE CNMI WEBSITE: vaccinatecnmi.com
@cnmichcc

NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION
Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) Division
P.O. BOX 500514, Saipan, MP 96950-0514
Email: cnmi-cdbg-dr@nmhcgov.net | Website: http://www.cnmi-cdbgdr.com
Tels: (670) 233-9447 / 233-9448 / 233-9449 / 233-9450 | Fax: (670) 233-9452

Notice of Program Availability
Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) – Housing Programs

The Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC) wishes to announce the availability of the CDBG-DR Housing Programs. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has allocated the CNMI a total of $243,946,000 to aid in the recovery of Typhoon Mangkhut and Super Typhoon Yutu. $113,362,000 of the total amount is allocated to Housing Programs.

Eligibility Criteria
- Must be a U.S. Citizen, U.S. Permanent Resident, a U.S. National, or a qualified alien;
- Gross annual household income, according to size of household, must not exceed 120% of median income; and
- Must provide proof of ownership such as fee simple title to the property and not located in a floodplain.

Information on the CDBG-DR Housing Programs
- Elderly and/or disable applicants who were displaced by the storms are prioritized. However, eligible applicants that are mortgage ready will be prioritized on a first come, first serve basis over the elderly and/or disabled applicants who are not mortgage ready.
- Type of Financial Assistance:
  - Deferred Loans
  - Non-Interest (zero-interest) Bearing Loans
- **Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Program** loan amount: $10,000 up to the maximum HOME per-unit subsidy limits that apply to the CNMI as determined by HUD.
- **Homebuyer Program** loan amount: $1,000 to $250,000.

Application Steps
- Pre-qualification applications and checklist are available for pick up at the CDBG-DR Office and the NMHC Offices on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota or print an application made available on the NMHC and CDBG-DR websites at www.nmhcgov.net and www.cnmi-cdbgdr.com.
- Completed pre-qualification applications are being accepted at the NMHC CDBG-DR Office located on the 3rd Floor of the Ladera Building, Chalan Laulau, Beach Road, Saipan, NMHC Tinian Field Office (NMC Campus), and the NMHC Rota Field Office, Monday to Friday from 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM except Holidays.
- Once the pre-application is completed and submitted, the case workers will assess the pre-qualification application and determine whether the applicant is eligible for the programs(s). If the applicant is eligible, the case worker will schedule an appointment with the applicant. If an applicant is deemed ineligible, a notification will be sent to the applicant.
- The case worker will inform the eligible applicant of the next steps once the pre-qualification application process has been completed.

Should you have any questions or need special accommodations, please contact the CDBG-DR office at 233-9447.

"NMHC is an equal employment and fair housing public agency"

One of victims in Puerto Rico crash sues Artman, driver

By KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA
kimberly_bautista@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

One of the victims in the Puerto Rico crash that killed one person over two weeks ago is now suing Artman Environment Corp. for damages, including future loss of earnings and medical expenses.

Rommel Irang is suing Artman and its driver, Eduardo Fabia, in Superior Court for reckless, careless, and negligent driving. Irang also asked the court for mandatory mediation among the parties. In the event the mandatory mediation is unsuccessful, Irang wants a jury trial.

Fabia has already been arrested and is due to be arraigned on Feb. 25 at the Marianas Business Plaza courtroom.

Irang was one of the two passengers of the Honda Ridgeline pickup truck that collided with an Artman garbage compactor truck collector driven by Fabia on Feb. 1, 2021, at the Puerto Rico-Middle Road intersection.

Irang sustained serious injuries, while the other passenger, Raju Miah, was declared dead on arrival at the hospital.

The two passengers were on the bed of the silver Honda Ridgeline and were thrown out of the vehicle during the collision.

According to the lawsuit, on or about Feb. 1, 2021, Irang was a passenger on the bed of the pickup that Quin Manglona was driving when the accident happened. The lawsuit states that Manglona was driving north and came to a complete stop at the traffic light intersection on Middle Road in Puerto Rico, with the intent to turn left toward the marina. When the left arrow turned green, he proceeded to enter the intersection. At that same time and in the same area, Fabia was driving an Artman-owned truck headed south when he allegedly ran the red light and hit Manglona's vehicle in the intersection.

The lawsuit also alleges that Fabia was driving faster than the posted speed limit of 45mph and that Fabia increased his speed as he approached the intersection, so that he was driving at a speed above 50 miles per hour when he entered the intersection.

"Without exercising caution and due care, [Fabia] violently struck Manglona's vehicle, causing serious personal injuries to [me] and total loss to Manglona's vehicle. Prior to the collision, Fabia never applied his brakes," Irang said in his suit.

As a result of Fabia's recklessness, carelessness and negligence plaintiff suffered and continues to suffer intense and excruciating pain, serious physical injuries, emotional and mental anguish and distress, and diminished quality of life and has suffered and will continue to suffer economic damages and non-economic damages.

Fabia's employer, Artman Environment Corp., is being sued for vicarious liability.

Soon after the fatal accident, Fabia and his passenger in the garbage truck were released at the scene, only for Fabia to be arrested a few days later.

According to court documents, Fabia was originally charged with traffic signal violation, false report, and homicide by vehicle. During last Thursday's hearing, the charge for false report was dismissed. ***(With Neil Fama)***

Michael Napu King Aldan, 33

By JUSTINE NAUTA
justine_nauta@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Gov. Ralph DLG Torres ordered last Friday that all flags across the Commonwealth be lowered to half-staff to mark the passing of Tinian Municipal Council vice chair Michael Napu King Aldan last Feb. 18 on Tinian.

Aldan

As per Torres' directive, all Commonwealth and U.S. flags will be flown at half-staff until the day of Aldan's burial. It was not immediately known when Aldan would be buried.

In addition to his duties with the 18th Tinian and Aguiguan Municipal Council, Aldan was also a police officer at the Tinian Department of Public Safety.

It was learned that Tinian Rep. Patrick H. San Nicolas (R-Tinian) asked House of Representative members toward the end of their session last Friday for a moment of silence to mark Aldan's passing.

In his announcement last Friday, Torres said he and Lt. Gov. Arnold I. Palacios, along with their families and the entire Commonwealth, join Tinian and Aguiguan Mayor Edwin P. Aldan, the Tinian leadership, and the people of Tinian in mourning Aldan's sudden and untimely passing.

"In addition to his elected office as a member of the 18th Tinian Municipal Council, he bravely answered the call of duty to serve his community as a police officer for the Department of Public Safety. He has sincerely touched many hearts with his passion and truly had a lot more to give for the people of Tinian," said Torres.

Tinian Mayor Edwin P. Aldan, through his office's official Facebook page, also extended his condolences. "You have touched many hearts with your spirit, and we believe you had great things planned for the community. May you rest in peace and love, councilman," said Edwin P. Aldan.

Many of the CNMI's public officials such as Senate President Jude U. Hofschneider (R-Tinian), Sen. Vinnie F. Sablan (Ind-Saipan), former representative L.J. Castro (Ind-Saipan), and more took to Facebook to show their love and support for Aldan's family.

"With profound sadness and utter disbelief on the untimely passing of our colleague, on behalf of the 22nd Senate, our families and staff, I wish to express our deepest sympathy and condolences to the family of the late Michael Napu King Aldan. …I pray that the family remains strong as we all find ways to cope with the sudden departure of our beloved. Rest in peace, vice chairman Aldan. Your memories will live in our hearts forever," said Hofschneider.

Sablan, who said he'd only known Aldan for a short while, said, "I had the chance to talk to him and hear his vision for Tinian. He was excited as a new young leader as I once was. I now see the impact he had on Tinian. He is loved and is missed dearly. Councilman, I have only known you for a short time, but I am honored to have had a good conversation with you. Thank you, sir, for all you have been for many. I join my family and staff to offer our sincere condolences to your family, friends and the dear people of Tinian."

In his Facebook post, Castro said that Aldan made him feel safe with every visit he made to Tinian. "From the moment he first placed his badge on as an officer of the peace, Councilman Aldan pledged his professional life to serving his friends and family. And in 2020, he decided to take his oath of service to the next level by seeking elected office to serve in the municipal council."

Free sailing sessions, canoe rides on Sundays

500 Sails is offering free sailing sessions and canoe rides for the community every Sunday.

The "Sunday Sails" Program is from 10am to 2pm at the Guma Sakman in Susupe. All levels are welcome. Young children must be accompanied by an adult.

Launched by master navigator Mario Benito last October, this program puts seasoned sailors and novices together to learn how to sail traditional canoes made of modern materials.

Bring healthy drinks to share, a water bottle, swim clothes, a towel, and a friend. There is often an informal barbecue, so bring something to share if you like.

For more information, email info@500sails.org, follow 500 Sails at https://www.facebook.com/500SailsDolphinClubSaipan, or call 500 Sails co-founder Emma Perez at 670-285-4268. ***(PR)***

Stay Connected
Payment Notice
We want to keep you connected to everything that matters to you. To avoid any service interruptions to your residential, business, or government account, please make payment by Monday, February 22, 2021.
For your health and safety when visiting our store, please wear a mask and be mindful of the social distancing measures we have in place. If you prefer not to visit, you may make payment online at store.ite.net/onlinebilling or by calling Customer Care at 682-4ITE (4483).
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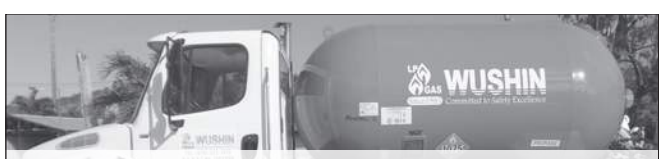
IT&E

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLAND
WEBEX MEETING FEBRUARY 23, 2021
U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs
Honolulu Regional Office - Public Contact Team
Will host a Virtual Benefits Workshop for Veterans, Family Members, Surviving Spouses, and Community Providers
on
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2021
From
5:00PM-7:00PM (CNMI LOCAL TIME)
To participate please join us in Cisco Webex by clicking or copying and pasting the following link:
**DOWNLOAD SLIDES AT: https://www.benefits.va.gov/honolulu/
https://veteransaffairs.webex.com/veteransaffairs/j.php?MTID=ma0c4b5a9905c1e48148bcc671fa9b9ed
You can join via Computer, Phone Audio (1-404-397-1596, 1998705956##), or Webex Mobile App
Benefits Workshop Topics:
Compensation, Pension, Education & Training, DIC, Survivor Benefits, Loan Guaranty, Veteran Readiness & Employment, Burial and Plot Internment Allowance, Burial Flags, & Insurance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awareness is the key!
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For your LPGas needs, please call 322-7415 or 322-8733
Open from 8:00am – 5:00pm Monday to Friday | 8:00am – 2:00pm Saturday

Gas nears $5 mark

The upward trend in fuel prices continues, with gas nearing $5 per gallon, the highest it's been in over a year.

Over the weekend, oil companies in the CNMI raised their gas prices by 10 cents, with Mobil Oil Marianas taking the lead Friday afternoon. Shell Marianas followed suit early Saturday morning.

Mobil raised it prices from $4.20 for a gallon of Extra fuel to $4.30 per gallon. Mobil's Supreme fuel also increased from $4.65 per gallon to $4.75 per gallon. A gallon of Mobil's Diesel is now $4.48 per gallon.

Many took to social media to voice their frustration with the increases.

One individual, a male motorist, said the economy is still in the process of recovering, so oil prices shouldn't be going up every week.

"We can't even start fully recovering and we have to worry about gas prices going up to $5. This is ridiculous," he said.

The price of fuel in the CNMI before the government shutdown as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic was $3.83.

According to various social media outlets, oil prices have reached their highest levels in over a year due to the blast of Arctic weather that is causing a strain in the oil and gas industry in Texas, one of the pillars of the global energy market.

Media outlets say about half of the oil supply was knocked out in Texas, the heart of the U.S. energy industry, resulting in U.S. oil prices topping $61 a barrel in early trading last week.

It is estimated that about 3 million barrels a day of oil output had been affected. The Permian basin, one of the world's largest oilfields that accounts for more than a quarter of total U.S. oil supply, is operating at well under half its normal capacity. ***(Kimberly A. Bautista)***

TINIAN

From Page 1

Jones, who is currently in North Carolina, said it's been decades since she's been on Tinian "and the best memories I have of Tinian are the people, the church, school, and everything. …It may be a memory now but…it was one of the memorable times of my newly married life when I was there."

When she asked him what he's going to do with all the land, he replied that he was going to plant vegetables. "He had already brought in cattle from New Zealand and he wanted to expand the herd and produce fresh and healthy milk not only for the people of Tinian but also for the Payless Market in Guam and Saipan if he produced enough. His goal was also to make cheese and have a butter making factory," Elaine Jones added.

His daughter, Ramona L. Jones, chief executive officer of Jones & Guerrero Co. Inc. and is now based in Guam, who grew up spending time and working at the farm, said her father brought in Charolais cattle from New Zealand because he felt that the hardiness of the cattle will do well on Tinian.

"But he decided from the beginning he also needs to find a local cattle to have them breed and that's why he brought the cattle from Rota and Tinian to have heartier breed specific to Tinian. …Different managers came from Australia and Hawaii because he wanted to get the expertise of professional educators and ranchers but he ended up taking the advice of all the local folks like Uncle Freddy Hofschneider and Sylvestre Palacios," she said.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

2,898

From Page 1

waiting for their applications to be adjudicated.

The delegate said he obtained the data from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, which gave him an update on applications for the CNMI Permanent Resident status, in preparation for his meeting with newly-sworn U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas.

Former president Donald J. Trump signed into law in June 2019 Public Law 116-24, the Northern Mariana Islands Long-Term Legal Residents Relief Act, that Sablan had introduced. The legislation was written to protect from deportation the 1,038 individuals who had been granted humanitarian parole during the Obama administration.

Once the act was signed into law, DHS temporarily extended parole and set an Aug. 17, 2020, deadline for those affected to apply for permanent resident status in the CNMI.

Long-Term Resident Status provided under Public Law 116-24 allows the recipient to live and work legally in the Marianas for as long as they want without the need to apply for any other immigration visa or status.

Sablan said USCIS is trying to reduce the backlog, including by distributing the workload to more field offices.

He said that, according to USCIS, it is facing numerous challenges due to COVID-19, including the closure of the Saipan Application Service Center, where biometric data is collected, and a high rate of requests for evidence to demonstrate eligibility for the new permanent resident status.

Sablan said USCIS' current COVID-19 flexibilities do allow an additional 60 days beyond the normal 12-week response requirement for applicants to respond to requests for evidence.

The delegate said Mayorkas, who was sworn in as Homeland Security secretary earlier this month by Vice President Kamala Harris, reached out to him to renew the relationship they built when he led USCIS during the Obama administration.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

VACCINATION

From Page 1

tonomous agencies and entities, but Torres encourages these agencies, including the Commonwealth Ports Authority and the Commonwealth Utilities Corp., to respond to the present situation in a similar manner.

"Consistent with the duty to provide and maintain a workplace free of recognized hazards, this policy is adopted to safeguard the health and wellbeing of employees and their families, patrons, clients, visitors, others who spend time in our facilities, and the community, from the risks associated with COVID-19," he said.

Torres said this policy is intended to comply with applicable federal and Commonwealth guidance and authority, including guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and Commonwealth public health authorities.

Under this policy, all Executive Branch employees are mandated to either complete the vaccination program or obtain an approved exemption accommodation.

All department and activity heads will require reasonable timelines for their employees to schedule and complete the COVID-19 vaccination regime, which means a two-shot inoculation.

He said employees that go through the vaccination program must provide their employer (through their direct supervisor or office personnel specialist) with a written document from the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. that states that they've completed the two shots of the vaccine. "Failure to provide this documentation may be grounds for adverse personnel action," the governor said.

He said employees may obtain an approved exemption from the vaccination as an accommodation. Employees may request for a medical exception accommodation or a religious exemption accommodation.

He said a request by an employee for a medical exemption accommodation will be granted where the employee demonstrates a medical condition that makes it inadvisable for that employee to receive a vaccine, unless such an accommodation poses an undue hardship to the employer.

An employee asking for exemption on religious grounds will be asked to provide evidence such as a personal statement explaining the belief or a statement from a third-party demonstrating the employee's sincerity of belief (example, a priest, pastor, a person well acquainted with employee) or other document validating or describing the specifics of the reason preventing the employee from receiving the vaccine.

Torres asked department and activity heads to engage in an interactive process to determine if a reasonable accommodation can be provided that does not create an undue hardship on their departments or activities and/or does not pose a threat to the health and safety of others in the workplace and/or to the employee.

Torres noted that if no reasonable accommodation is possible, then the agency may exclude the employee from the workplace. "Exclusion may ultimately mean termination," the governor pointed out.

To request a medical or religious-based exemption accommodation, employee must notify his/her direct supervisor in writing along with any necessary supporting evidence.

"Once your department or activity head is aware of the need for an accommodation, the department or activity head will engage in an interactive process to identify possible accommodations," he said.

Torres said employees may request an accommodation without fear of retaliation.

He directed all department and activity heads, supervisors, and personne specialists to keep any statements, documents, or other information obtained from an employee in relation to this directive confidential.

COVID-19

From Page 1

wealth Healthcare Corp., the individuals were identified by travel screening and confirmed diagnosis through testing upon arrival. The individuals have been safely in quarantine and were moved to the designated isolation site at the alternative care site at Kanoa Resort for monitoring.

CHCC has already initiated contact tracing for the most immediate contacts of the new confirmed cases, including passengers on the same flight. *Saipan Tribune* attempted to ask if this was a family but this could not be ascertained due to confidentiality concerns.

So far, of the 143 COVID-19 cases the CNMI has had, 117 were identified by travel screening while 26 were deemed to be local transmissions. There are currently 15 persons in isolation. The CNMI has had no local transmission in the past 186 days.

As of Feb. 19, the CNMI has been allocated 29,650 doses of COVID-19 vaccines, according to CHCC chief executive officer Esther Muña.

Speaking at a media briefing last Feb. 19, Muña said the CNMI has been "very successful" in its Dose 2 rate. "We've been getting 99%, 100% every day on people that are getting their Dose 2 so…when people get their Dose 1, they do come back for the dose when we have that ready for them," said Muña.

She added that they will continue to prioritize the elderly, or the *man'amko*. This goes as far as allowing the *man'amko* to walk in and register to get the vaccine. Only the *man'amko* can walk in for their shots; everybody else have to have make an online appointment. The age range for *man'amko* is 55 years and above.

As of Feb. 19, Muña said there is still no clear date to when they will vaccinate the public or those who don't fall under the any of the phases that CHCC has allowed so far.

COVID-19 in Guam

According to the Joint Information Center, Guam Gov. Lou Leon Guerrero has secured more COVID-19 vaccines for Guam, while 10 individuals tested positive for COVID-19 last Feb. 18.

The new 10 positive cases were identified out of 521, said JIC. Two had a travel history and were identified in quarantine. Six were identified through contact tracing.

According to the JIC, Leon Guerrero's earlier request to Operation Warp Speed chief operating officer of Gen. Gustave Perna has secured additional COVID-19 vaccines for Guam. Last Feb. 20, early Saturday, the head of the White House's vaccine distribution operation committed to increasing Guam's March allocation, bringing the month's total to 35,260 vaccines.

"Vaccine allocation is dependent on vaccine production. Also considered is the jurisdiction's performance, Guam notably leading the nation with vaccination efforts," said JIC.

As of Feb. 20, 14,200 Moderna and 21,060 Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines are expected to arrive within the first week of March. Because of the severe winter weather in the U.S., allotment cannot be advanced.

JIC said that the March allotment is the largest Guam will receive since COVID-19 vaccines were made available in December 2020.

HOUSE

From Page 2

commitment to the community," Demapan said.

Demapan himself introduced two bills, Rep. Joseph Lee Pan T. Guerrero (R-Saipan) eight, Rep. Joseph A. Flores (Ind-Saipan) two, Rep. John Paul P. Sablan (R-Saipan) two, Rep. Ivan A. Blanco (R-Saipan) five, and Blas Jonathan T. Attao (R-Saipan) one. Most of these are bills that had been introduced in the previous Legislature that did not make it into law.

From the majority bloc, Reps. Christina Marie E. Sablan (D-Saipan), Donald M. Manglona (Ind-Rota), and Richard T. Lizama (D-Saipan) each filed one bill.

With respect to local bills, Manglona filed two, while Blanco introduced one.

Blanco and floor leader Rep. Ralph N. Yumul (R-Saipan) each filed one House resolution.

The minority bloc, with the assistance of the Tan Siu Lin Foundation and other partners, has just restored the Dandan Children's Park, San Antonio basketball court, and the Capital Hill baseball field and basketball court.

This week, Demapan said, they will be moving into Navy Hill to restore the basketball court there.

"We're trying to cover all the precincts, every rotation. So now we are heading into our fourth project. So far so good. We have been receiving very good community response and just seeing all the young kids come to the court when the projects are completed to play the sports is a good thing," Demapan said.

Reps. Christina Sablan and John Paul Sablan, also with the help of the Tan Siu Lin Foundation and other partners, also recently completed restoring the Susupe basketball court.

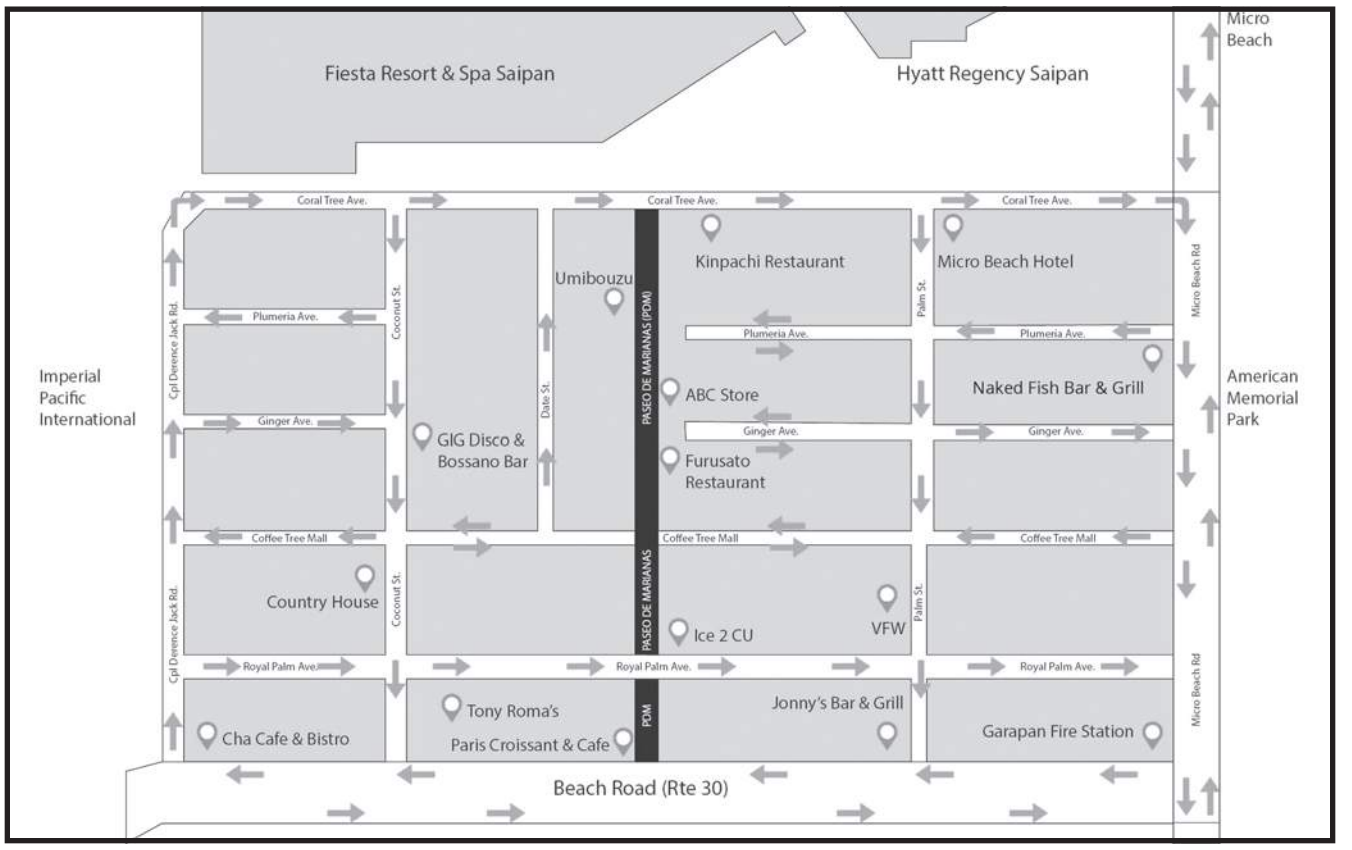
New one-way streets in Garapan Core

Starting today, Feb. 22, 2021, traffic flow in Western Garapan will be changed to add more one-way streets in a bid to improve the flow of traffic and add more parking spaces.

According to a statement from the Garapan Revitalization Task Force, certain streets will be designated as one-way streets in Western Garapan, also known as Garapan Core or Hotel Street to improve overall traffic flow, promote the safety and wellbeing of pedestrians and moving vehicles, and increase public parking space.

Upon completion of this entire project, it is estimated that the plan will allow approximately 300 parking spaces available for public use.

The Tournament of Champions non-profit organization has donated $13,385.55 worth of directional signs valuedt, with additional support coming from Safety 1st Systems CNMI, Inc. DPW will install the new signs. TanHoldings donated traffic paint for road markings and parking lines.



The proposed street directional changes include the following:

- Cpl. Derence Jack Rd. one-way westbound from Beach Rd. to Coral Tree Ave.
- Royal Palm Ave. one-way northbound from Cpl. Derence Jack Rd. to Micro Beach Rd.
- Coffee Tree Mall one-way southbound from Coconut St. to Cpl. Derence Jack Rd.
- Coffee Tree Mall one-way southbound from Micro Beach Rd. to Palm St.
- Ginger Ave. one-way northbound from Cpl. Derence Jack Rd. to Coconut St.
- Ginger Ave. one-way northbound from Palm St. to Micro Beach Rd.
- Plumeria Ave. one-way southbound from Coconut St. to Cpl. Derence Jack Rd.
- Plumeria Ave. one-way southbound from Micron Beach Rd. to Palm St.
- Coconut St. one-way eastbound from Coral Tree Ave. to Beach Rd.
- Date St. one-way westbound from Coffee Tree Mall to Coral Tree Ave. ***(PR)***

Kilili says KCHC will get, administer COVID-19 vaccines

The Kagman Community Health Center will be able to receive and administer COVID-19 vaccines, in addition to the vaccines already being sent to the Marianas each month, according to Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (Ind-MP) in his e-kilili newsletter over the weekend.

This comes soon after the Health Resources and Services Administration announced last Tuesday that KCHC is one of 250 federally qualified health centers nationwide selected to participate in the Ensuring Equity in COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution program, Sablan said.

"That means more of us will be vaccinated more quickly," said Sablan.

The doses provided, he said, will be separate from the vaccines already being allocated to the Marianas each month and should mean more people will be vaccinated more quickly.

Sablan said the *man'amko* (age 65 and above), homebound healthcare patients, and individuals working in high risk health care and first responder settings are currently eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccine on all islands.

On Saipan, individuals who are 55 years and older and workers critical to the CNMI infrastructure across the public and private sector are also eligible. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
Office of the Executive Director

REQUEST FOR ARCHITECTURAL AND ENGINEERING SERVICES
CUC-RAES-21-010

A&E Design Services for the Agingan Wastewater Treatment Upgrade (S19-068)

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed proposals from qualified Architectural and Engineering (A&E) firms for the Design Services of the Agingan Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade in Agingan, Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

This project is funded by a grant from the United States of Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of the approval for project award from USEPA.

Prospective Proposers for this project must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The RAES package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $100.00 for one package set.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies of the Proposal and One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies of the Cost Proposal in a separate envelope must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked **"CUC-RAES-21-010, A&E Design Services for Agingan Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade"**, to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on March 11, 2021. Late submissions and conditional proposals will not be considered.**

Discussions may be conducted with responsible proposers who submit proposal determined to be reasonably susceptible of being selected for award for the purpose of clarification and to ensure full understanding of and responsiveness to solicitation requirements. All proposers shall be accorded fair and equal treatment with respect to any opportunity for discussion. During discussions, there will be no disclosure of any information derived from the proposal submitted by competing proposers.

All proposers are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the proposers due to lack of information or understanding of the proposal requirements in the course of Consultant's preparation of a proposal under the contract. The RAES does not commit CUC to award a contract, to pay any cost incurred in the preparation of the statement of qualifications under this request, or to procure or contract for services. Consultants are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This RAES and the ensuing contract shall be executed as per the CUC Procurement Regulations.

All questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered prospective proposers and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on February 22, 2021** to Mr. Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email – manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Mr. Larry Manacop, CUC Water/Wastewater, Acting Chief Engineer – via email larry.manacop@cucgov.org; Westen Knudsen, Water/Wastewater Engineer – via email westen.knudsen@cucgov.org and Ms. Christie L. Sablan, Administrative Technician Senior – via email christie.sablan@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all proposals and waive any imperfection in the proposal in the best interest of the government. All proposals shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
Office of the Executive Director

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-21-017

CNMI STREETLIGHT EFFICIENCY PROJECT

The Office of the Executive Director for the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids for the supply and delivery of Light Emitting Diode (LED) streetlight luminaires to promote energy and cost saving measures on the power distribution system in Saipan and Rota, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

This project is funded from the United states Department of the Interior (USDOIA).

Prospective Bidders must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $100.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked *"CUC-IFB-21-017, CNMI Streetlight Efficiency Project)"* to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on March 4, 2021** at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before due date and time or post-marked before submission deadline. Late submissions and conditional offers will not be considered.

A Bid Guarantee of not less than fifteen (15%) of the total bid price shall accompany the bids. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification should be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.*

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid or supply under the contract. The IFB does not commit CUC to award a contract, to pay any cost incurred in the preparation of the bid under this request, or to procure or contract for goods. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed as per the CUC Procurement Regulations.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from registered Proponents and must be submitted in writing **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on February 10, 2021** to Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Adrian Reyes, CUC Power Division Engineer via email adrian.reyes@cucgov.org; Alfred Palattao, CUC Power Division Engineer via email alfred.palattao@cucgov.org and Marcela Tenorio, Administrative Technician Senior via email marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and waive any non-material imperfection in the bid proposal if in its sole opinion to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY BOYER SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Decision in Hotel Riviera case affirmed

On Feb. 18, 2021, the CNMI Supreme Court issued its opinion in *PRC v. Globuil Resort*, affirming the trial court's judgment terminating Globuil Resort's lease.

In 1988, Jose Manalo leased a Fina Sisu property to Chung Doo Young for 55 years. Hotel Riviera partially sits on the property. Manalo later sold the property and assigned all his interests as lessor to PRC, LLC. After several assignments, Globuil Resort now holds all interests as lessee, including Hotel Riviera Saipan Inc.'s interests.

In July 2012, PRC sued Globuil Resort for failure to pay rent, nonpayment of taxes, and failure to maintain the property, among others. The trial court found in PRC's favor, holding Globuil Resort breached the contract because rent was never fully paid and the premises were left in an unsanitary and unsafe condition.

Globuil Resort appealed the court's judgment terminating the lease and ordering it to pay PRC $335,618.37, claiming forfeiture was not warranted because circumstances justified equitable relief.

Globuil Resort further argued that PRC—as a limited liability company—is not qualified to own real property in the CNMI and therefore had no right under Article 12 to terminate the lease. Globuil Resort first raised the Article 12 issue in its motion to dismiss at the trial court. The court denied the motion, holding any Article 12 issue was premature and would be addressed at trial. At trial, Globuil stipulated to PRC's ownership in fee simple and at no point did it raise the Article 12 issue again. During oral argument, Globuil Resort again conceded to PRC's fee simple ownership.

The Supreme Court affirmed the judgment, finding that the trial court properly terminated the lease. All Article 12 claims were found waived because of Globuil Resort's failure to argue the issue during trial or oral arguments.

The high court's full opinion is available at https://cnmilaw.org/pdf/supreme/2021-MP-05.pdf. ***(PR)***

Guam contractor try to sidestep overtime pay by classifying workers as contractors

DEDEDO, Guam—By deliberately misclassifying employees as independent contractors, a Dededo construction company attempted to avoid paying overtime when workers exceeded 40 hours in a workweek until a federal investigation uncovered the scheme.

» Konstrak Builders to pay $51K in overtime back wages to 23 workers

The U.S. Department of Labor's Wage and Hour Division determined Konstrak Builders—which provides maintenance and repair services to Mobil gas stations in Guam—intentionally violated the Fair Labor Standards Act when it continued to pay straight-time wages to 23 workers for overtime hours they worked. As a result, Konstrak will pay $51,481 in back overtime wages to those workers. The FLSA requires overtime at time and one-half employees' regular rates of pay for hours they work beyond 40 in a workweek. The employer also failed to keep accurate payroll records, as required.

In addition to the overtime back wages, WHD assessed Konstrak $10,000 in penalties for the willful nature of the violations.

"When employers misclassify employees as independent contractors for their own gain, they hurt their employees and they even hurt other businesses—the law-abiding employers who don't steal from their employees," said Wage and Hour Division district director Terence Trotter in Honolulu. "This case sends a clear message that the Wage and Hour Division will use every tool available to protect workers and responsible employers and to ensure everyone has the opportunity to succeed."

The division offers numerous resources to ensure employers have the tools they need to understand their responsibilities and to comply with federal law, such as online videos and confidential calls to local Wage and Hour offices. Learn more about the FLSA. Contact the Wage and Hour Division toll-free at 866-4US-WAGE (487-9243) for more information. ***(PR)***

MICHAEL A. WHITE, ESQ. F0122
THE LAW OFFICES OF MICHAEL A. WHITE, LLC
POST OFFICE BOX 5222
SAIPAN, MARIANA ISLANDS 96950
TEL: (670) 234-6547 | FAX: (670) 234-9537

ATTORNEY FOR Plaintiff

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT FOR THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING COPORATION, Plaintiff, -v- AGRIPINA J. GIODA and MICHAEL J. GIODA, Defendants.) CIVIL ACTION NO. 18-0103

FIRST AMENDED NOTICE OF SALE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that, pursuant to an Order issued by the Court in this matter on January 4, 2021, I will sell, at public auction, to the highest bidder, on the terms and conditions set forth hereinbelow, all of the right, title, and interest of Defendants in and to the following property:

Legal description of the property:
Lot no. 011 G 264, situated in Kagman III, Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands, containing an area of 750 square meters, more or less, as shown on the Divisions of Lands and Surveys Official Cadastral Plat no. 011 G 06 dated December 1, 1993, Commonwealth Recorder's File no. 93-4414, the description therein being incorporated herein by reference.

Total area of the property: 750 square meters, more or less

Known encumbrances: None.

Date, Time, and Place of Sale. The sale will be held on Monday, March 22, 2021, at the hour of 1:30 p.m., at The Law Offices of Michael A. White, LLC, Joeten Center, Susupe, Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands. The sale will be open to the general public. Copies of a title insurance report for the properties are available to any prospective bidder upon request.

Terms and Conditions of Sale. The Terms and Conditions of Sale may be obtained from the undersigned, either prior to or at the sale. These terms and conditions shall govern the conduct of the sale.

DATED, this 15th day of February, 2021:

/s/ MICHAEL A. WHITE, Auctioneer

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT FOR THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

IN THE MATTER OF THE PETITION FOR CHANGE OF NAME OF: R.D.B. and R.J.D.B., Minor Children, BY: Rafaelito B. Alvarado and Cherylyn D. Bocago, Petitioners.) **FCD CN CIVIL ACTION NO. 20-0096** **ORDER AFTER HEARING**

This matter came before the Court for a Change of Name Hearing on January 8, 2021 at 9:00 a.m., in Courtroom 202A. Rafaelito B. Alvarado and Cherylyn D. Bocago ("Petitioner") appeared pro se.

Based on the matters adduced, this matter is continued to **March 12, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.**, at the Superior Court. Petitioner was ordered to publish the Notice of Hearing on the newspaper at least ten (10) days before the Court hearing and post a copy of the Notice Superior Court's bulletin board located at the Marianas Business Plaza. The Petitioners are ordered to appear.

SO ORDERED on the date set forth above in the year 2021.

/s/ TERESA KIM-TENORIO, Associate Judge

VINCENT J. SEMAN, CNMI Bar No. F-0361
Seman Law Offices, LLC
JET Realty Bldg., Suite 204
P.O. Box 10001 PMB 168, Saipan, MP 96950
Telephone: (670) 323-2115
E-mail: vjseman@semanlaw.com
Attorney for: Petitioner Eldin J. Maratita

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT FOR THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

IN MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF BRIGIDA NAKATSUKASA MARATITA, Deceased) PROBATE CASE NO. 20-0152CV NOTICE OF HEARING ON PETITION FOR DECREE OF FINAL DISTRIBUTION Date: Thursday, March 4, 2021 Time: 10:00 AM Judge: Joseph N. Camacho

TO: THE GENERAL PUBLIC, ANY HEIRS, CLAIMANTS, OR CREDITORS OF THE LATE BRIGIDA NAKATSUKASA MARATITA OR OF HER ESTATE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that Eldin J. Maratita, has petitioned the Superior Court of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands for Decree of Final Distribution. The attorney for Petitioner is Vincent J. Seman, Esq., whose address is JET Building, Suite 204, Chalan Pale Arnold, Gualo Rai, PO Box 10001 PMB 168, Saipan, MP 96950

The hearing on the Petition for Decree of Final Distribution by the Administrator is scheduled to be heard on Thursday, March 4, 2021 at 10:00am, at before Judge Joseph N. Camacho, Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Dated this 17 February 2021.

By: /s/
CLERK OF COURT

Mount Carmel School president Dr. Galvin Deleon Guerrero, seated center, signs the memorandum of agreement to commit the school to the Public Private Partnership of the Governor's Council of Economic Advisers, which is co-chaired by TanHoldings president and CEO Jerry Tan, seated left, and Gov. Ralph DLG Torres, seated right. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

MCS signs up for PPP

Mount Carmel School has become the first school to sign up for the Public Private Partnership Program of the Governor's Council of Economic Advisers, committing to develop and maintain the Sugar Dock Beach.

On behalf of Mount Carmel School, school president Dr. Galvin Deleon Guerrero signed the memorandum of understanding with the GCEA last Thursday, Feb. 18, 2021, in a ceremony at the Hibiscus Hall of Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan.

Mount Carmel School joins the CNMI Lions Club in sponsoring the beach as the first educational institution to sign up for the program to maintain and beautify some of CNMI's major tourist sites and attractions.

In response to the constricted tourist arrivals due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the GCEA views this period as an opportune time to reimagine the tourism product the CNMI offers and as an opportunity to build synergies between public and private stakeholders of CNMI.

The Public Private Partnership Program calls on public and private agencies to take ownership of maintaining and beautifying major tourist attractions in the CNMI.

"I commend the Governor's Council of Economic Advisers for initiating the Public Private Partnership program," said Deleon Guerrero. "…We all have a shared interest in ensuring that the CNMI is a competitive destination in the tourist industry. Our school family takes great pride in joining this shared effort to maintain and beautify a major local and tourist attraction like Sugar Dock Beach."

MCS senior and Eco Club president Brandee Hunter shared her excitement for this new venture. "When I learned about the PPP, I was so excited that our school was the first to join this effort to clean, restore, and beautify our Commonwealth. What's so special about this opportunity is that it calls on our community to take care of our land, which I think will instill in everyone a sense of ownership in taking care of our environment," she said. ***(PR)***

IPI, EEOC settlement talks continue

Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC and the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission continue to negotiate a settlement in EEOC's suit alleging sexual harassment and unfair employment practices.

According to the minutes of the proceedings, U.S. District Court for the NMI Magistrate Judge Heather L. Kennedy has scheduled another settlement conference for March 3, 2021 at 10am. The jury trial in the case is still set to begin on Sept. 28, 2021.

During the proceedings held last Wednesday, IPI was represented by attorney Stephen Nutting while the EEOC was represented by attorney Eric Yau.

According to court documents, the EEOC sued IPI back in September 2019 for alleged sexual harassment and unfair employment practices on behalf of a VIP hostess, and other similarly aggrieved female employees.

IPI has denied the allegations and has asked the federal court to dismiss the complaint. ***(Kimberly A. Bautista)***

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL LICENSING
P.O. Box 502078, Bldg., 1242 Pohnpei Court
Capitol Hill, Saipan, MP 96950
Tel No: (670) 664-4809 Fax: (670) 664-4814
Email: cnmi@cnmibpl-hcplb.net
Website: cnmibpl-hcplb.net

Pursuant to P. L. 8-41, Section 11, Governor Ralph Torres and Lt. Governor Arnold I. Palacios, through the Board of Professional Licensing (BPL) are hereby giving notice that it will hold its quarterly board meeting on **Wednesday, February 24, 2021 at 8:00a.m.** on Saipan. The meeting will be held at the Governor's Office Conference Room, Capitol Hill, Saipan.

AGENDA

I. Meeting Call to Order
II. Determination of Quorum
III. Review and Adoption of Agenda (November 24, 2020)
IV. Review and Adoption of Minutes
V. Public Comments
VI. Chairman's Report
VII. Director's Report
  A. Financial Report
  B. FY2022 Propose Budget
  C. NCEES and CLARB Virtual Meetings
VIII. Investigator's Report
IX. Communications from the Governor's Office & Legislature
  A. Governor's Office
    1.) OMB FY2022 Budget Call
  B. Legislature
X. Old Business
XI. Executive Session: The Board may vote to meet in executive session to consult with counsel with pending or anticipated legal matters.
XII. New Business
XIII. Applications for Board's Review
XIV. Miscellaneous Business
XV. Announcements
  A. Next Meeting Date
  B. Adjournment of Meeting

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM, OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
Tel: (670) 664-2371 | Fax: (670) 664-2408 | Caller Box 10007, Saipan, MP 96950

INVITATION TO BID
ITB21-GOV-040

Roof Repair & Coating at 1300 Block Government Buildings, Capitol Hill

Governor Ralph DLG. Torres and Lt. Governor Arnold I. Palacios, through the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) are soliciting sealed bids for the ***Roof Repair & Coating at 1300 Block Government Buildings*** in Capitol Hill, Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). This project will be funded by the 702 Covenant funding under the U.S. Department of Interior, Office of Insular Affairs.

The project package will be available on **February 8, 2021** at the CIP Program Office, Office of the Governor, Juan A. Sablan Administration Building in Capitol Hill, Saipan. **All interested bidders are required to include an Insurer Certification Clearance (ICC) in their bid packages in order to bid on this project. The ICC should be obtained at the Department of Commerce, Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC) on Capitol Hill.**

Bidding procedures shall be in full compliance with the CNMI Procurement Regulations currently in effect and with the Northern Mariana Islands Administrative Code (NMIAC) §70.30.3-725 Gratuities and Kickbacks and §70.30.3-730 Prohibition Against Contingent Fees. All wage rates for employees performing the work, labor and services on this project shall be paid at the current U.S. prevailing wage rates established for the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

There will be a pre-bid conference on February 24, 2021 at 10:00 a.m at the project site, beginning at Building 1314, in Capitol Hill, Saipan. Questions concerning this project shall be directed to Sunny Aldan in writing by e-mail: sunnyaldan.cip@gmail.com, on or before **March 1, 2021** to the Capital Improvement Program, Office of the Governor, Juan A. Sablan Administration Building, Capitol Hill, Saipan, or fax (670) 664-2408. All questions submitted after the given deadline will **NOT** be entertained. All responses to inquiries will be shared with all prospective bidders.

Sealed bids must be marked ***ITB20-GOV-040Roof Repair & Coating at 1300 Block Government Buildings, Capitol Hill.*** For bidders within the CNMI, one (1) original and two (2) copies of sealed bids must be submitted to the Director of Procurement Services located at the former Emergency Management Office, Building No. 1301, Ascencion Drive, Capitol Hill on Saipan no later than **10:30 a.m. ChST, March 10, 2021.** Bidders located outside of the CNMI **MUST** fill out the Notice of Intent to Bid Form on (PAGE 3) in order to receive this additional seven (7) working days for receipt of their actual bid documents. This Notice of Intent to Bid Form may be submitted to the Director of Procurement Services through facsimile to (670) 664-1515 or e-mailed to a.magofna@dof.gov.mp but must be received no later than 10:30 a.m., ChST, March 10, 2021. ***Note that failure to submit this Notice of Intent Bid Form will be subject to the rejection of a bid.*** For bidders located outside the CNMI, one (1) original and two (2) copies of sealed bids must be postmarked by the U.S. Postal Service or the official government postal service of a foreign country no later than **March 10, 2021,** mailed to the Acting Director of Procurement Services at P.O. Box 510008 C.K., Saipan, MP, 96950, and must be received no later than **March 19, 2021**. Failure to submit the required number of copies may be cause for rejection of a bid.

Bids will be publicly opened and read at the Division of Procurement Services located at the former Emergency Management Office, Building No. 1301, Ascencion Drive, Capitol Hill on Saipan at ***10:30 a.m. ChST, March 22, 2021.*** However, if no notices of intent to bid are received from bidders outside the CNMI, bids will be open at ***10:30 a.m. ChST March 10, 2021.***

For bids greater than Twenty-Five Thousand Dollars ($25,000.00) a bid security of fifteen percent (15%) of the bid amount must accompany the bid. Bid security shall be on a bid bond, in cash, by certified check, cashier's check or other form acceptable to the government. A surety company shall hold the certificate of authority from the U.S. Secretary of the Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General. Checks must be made payable to the CNMI Treasurer, with the name of the bidder and a notation on the face of the check. If a bid bond is submitted it must be accompanied by an Insurer Clearance Certification (ICC).

The bidder submitting the lowest responsive bid will be subject to a responsibility determination in conformance with the CNMI Procurement Regulations Section 70-30.3-245. The responsible bidder submitting the lowest responsive bid will be awarded a contract with the CNMI Government and will be required to deliver Performance and Payment bonds, each equal to 100% of the contract price for contracts greater than $25,000.00.
Prior to the execution of the contract, the selected contractor shall submit:

a) A current license from the bonding company showing that it has authority to issue bond in the CNMI, and
b) A certification from the bonding company that the unencumbered value of its assets (exclusive of all outstanding commitments on other bond obligations) exceeds the penal amount of each bond.

A contractor submitting an unacceptable payment or performance bond may be permitted a reasonable time, as determined by the P&S Director, to substitute an acceptable bond prior to executing a contract. Acceptable assets are only:

1) Cash
2) US Government Securities
3) Stocks and Bonds traded on US Security Exchange
4) Real Property owned in fee simple in US; and
5) Irrevocable Letters of Credit

Performance time for completion of this project is One Hundred Twenty (120) calendar days upon issuance of Notice to Proceed. The daily amount of liquidated damages shall be $200.

All bid documents received shall become the sole property of the CNMI Government. The Government reserves the right to reject any or all bids and to waive any imperfection in a bid proposal that does not affect the elements of price, quantity, and delivery of the bid, in the best interest of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Notice to all Proposers/Bidders located outside of the Commonwealth Northern Mariana Islands. This Notice of Intent MUST be filled out and submitted on or before the given ITB/RFP submission deadline to the Acting Director of Procurement Services via email to a.magofna@dof.gov.mp or via facsimile to (670) 664-1515. Note that failure to submit this required document will be subject to rejection of bid/proposal.

BREACH OF ETHICAL STANDARDS
(To be part of Solicitation for quotes, ITBs and RFPs)

- ***Gratuities.*** It shall be a breach of ethical standards for any person to offer, give or agree to give any employee or former employee, or for any employee or former employee to solicit, demand, accept or agree to accept from another person, a gratuity or an offer of employment in connection with any decision, approval, disapproval, recommendation, preparation of any part of a program requirement or a purchase request, influencing the content of any specification or procurement standard, rendering of advice, investigation, auditing or in any other advisory capacity in any proceeding or application, request for ruling, determination, claim or controversy, or other particular matter, pertaining to any program requirement or a contract or subcontract or to any solicitation or proposal therefor. NMIAC Section 70-30.3-725(a).
- ***Kickbacks.*** It shall be a breach of ethical standards for any payment, gratuity or offer of employment to be made by or on behalf of a subcontractor under a contract to the prime contractor or higher tier subcontractor or any person associated therewith as an inducement for the award of subcontractor or order. NMIAC Section 70-30.3-725(b).
- ***Contingent Fees.*** It shall be a breach of ethical standards for a person to be retained, or to retain a person, to solicit or secure government contracts upon an agreement or understanding for a commission, percentage, brokerage or contingent fee, except for retention of bona fide employees or bona fide established commercial selling agencies for the purpose of securing business. NMIAC Section 70-30.3-730.

The government reserves the right to reject any and all proposals, in whole or in part, and to waive any imperfection in a proposal if in the best interest of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. All proposals shall become the property of the CNMI government.

Ralph DLG. Torres
Governor, CNMI

Francisco C Aguon, Acting Director
CNMI Procurement Services

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
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Jayvee L. Vallejera EDITOR
editor@saipantribune.com

Mark Rabago ASSOCIATE EDITOR
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com

MEMBER
The Associated Press Pacific Islands News Association

ONE DAY IN A CARTOONIST'S OFFICE...
RUSH LIMBAUGH JUST DIED SO REMEMBER, IF YOU CAN'T SAY SOMETHING NICE ABOUT SOMEONE...
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EDITORIAL

Rush in the arena

Rush Limbaugh, who died Wednesday at 70, was, to liberals, leftists and maybe to a good number of people in the political center, an agitator and showman at best, and, at worst, a lout, a loudmouth and a demagogue.

But to many conservative Americans, libertarians, populists and just plain folks who are tired of being told what to think and how to say what they think or feel, he was a hero. He was a truth-teller. He spoke truth to the power of the dominant media and academic culture.

And not only was he fearless. Not only was he uncrushable. He was funny. His one-liners went to the heart of the hypocrisy and rubbish he perceived in American life.

He said, for example, that the reason we have a Second Amendment is in case the First Amendment is destroyed.

Listen to a few other Limbaugh bon mots:

■ "Liberals measure compassion by how many people are given welfare. Conservatives measure compassion by how many people no longer need it."

■ "Liberalism is a scourge. It destroys the human spirit. It destroys prosperity. It assigns sameness to everybody. And wherever I find it, I oppose it."

■ "I must be honest. I can only read so many paragraphs of a New York Times story before I puke."

Limbaugh was one of a kind. He said no one else did what he did, and he was right.

Long before Donald Trump, Rush Limbaugh — who started his career at Pittsburgh-area radio stations — was the champion of the forgotten working class, small-town America and the unsanctioned and invisible disenfranchised.

Long before Fox News, he became the voice of the Nixon-Reagan not-so-silent majority.

He had more wit than anyone on Fox and he lacked Trump's demons. He was actually optimistic about America and he loved what he did. He enjoyed life.

He loved the battle. He loved being in the arena as a gladiator of prejudices and controversies.

He said conviction plus research would attract people like a magnet.

And he proved it. He built an empire in radio and was the most important broadcaster since Paul Harvey.

Second only to Ronald Reagan, he stood as the champion of a traditional America that questioned the inherent goodness of change.

See RUSH on next page

Sure, I'd walk 6 miles to get that COVID-19 vaccine

By MARY SCHMICH
Chicago Tribune

Mary Schmich is a columnist for the Chicago Tribune *and winner of the 2012 Pulitzer Prize for commentary.*

My car was smothered in snow when I woke up Tuesday, the streets were drowning in slush, and when I glanced out my living room window, I instantly knew that my little Prius may as well have been stuck in cement.

"Why, oh why," I cried to the weather gods, "would you make this happen on this day, of all days?"

The cruel gods chortled and replied in chorus: "To test how much you want it, honey."

How much did I want it? Passionately, desperately, now. And so I put on three layers of pants, three top layers, two pair of socks, a mask, a hood, a scarf, a set of Yaktrax ice cleats and, with a trekking pole in hand for navigating piles of snirt, set out to get a COVID-19 vaccine.

Three miles on foot to get it, 3 miles back. That's how much I wanted that needle in my arm.

By the time the coronavirus pandemic is over, millions of Americans will have a story of the day they got the vaccine, and they'll want to tell it. I hear new tales every day.

"If I live another 30 years, I will remember it in the way I remember my polio sugar cube," said a friend who described her vaccination at a Chicago Walgreens on Saturday as "exciting."

Another told me about the "comforting and kind" Walgreens pharmacist, Kishon, who gave her the shot on Sunday. "I almost cried," she said.

A friend in Baltimore did cry.

"I got one Tuesday, by sheer luck, after registering everywhere and haunting every site and growing increasingly frustrated as people all around me secured shots," she emailed. "When they waved me over to a desk for the shot, to my huge surprise I got choked up. All the tension of weeks of struggling for an appointment after 11 months of anxiety. I sat down with this very nice tech and I said, 'You won't believe this but as I walked over to you I got teary.' And she looked up reassuringly and said: 'Lots of people cry.'"

The only thing I knew Tuesday as I embarked on my vaccine expedition was that I might cry if I missed that shot. So I slogged through the slush, clambered over unplowed curbs, cursed only mildly when a snowplow whisked by and splattered me with crud.

I took heart in the fact that the sun was out and the wind was down and it felt good to see the city. An hour after I left home, I wheeled through the doors at Northwestern Medicine Prentice Women's Hospital, sanitized my hands, took an obligatory yellow mask, rode the elevator to the third floor, stood in a short line for a spot at one of the registration tables and was soon herded toward the giant vaccination room.

"Thanks for making the trek," said the man who waved me onward.

I knew he applied the word "trek" to everyone, but I enjoyed the way it made my walk feel like scaling Mount Everest.

Then I was sitting at vaccination station No. 35, in a vast room full of masked people. What a curious ritual, all these strangers baring their arms together.

I noticed the OB-GYN badge on the woman who prepared to jab mine. Yes, she said, when I asked, she was a midwife.

"But no one was in labor," she said, "and so I came to help."

The room had that vibe: people here to help, to be helped. It was full of talk and laughter.

"It's very convivial in here," I said.

"People are very excited," the midwife said.

And then she plunged the needle in my left arm. A brief sting, a quick burn. And that was that. Weeks of waiting, over.

"One down, one to go!" a man near me rejoiced.

In a steady stream, the newly vaccinated masses were waved toward an "observation" space where everyone is asked to sit for 15 minutes to make sure they don't react badly. A few people quietly exchanged vaccine war stories, of pharmacies called in vain, of websites that led them over and over down the path of frustration, of landing today's appointment just when they'd almost given up. One man recounted making 130 calls before he finally got an appointment miles from his house; when he arrived for that vaccine, the site was closed. All that frustration made today's vaccination even better.

In the end, I didn't cry. But on my walk home, I saw Chicago just a little differently. I passed "For Lease" signs in windows of what had once been stores. At Water Tower Place, the big signs in the window of Macy's, which is leaving, proclaimed "Entire Store on Sale." I passed empty shops and tents for outdoor dining.

It was a city conspicuously changed by the pandemic, and still struggling. But getting that vaccine made it easier to believe that we'll make it through, just as surely as the snow will melt.

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Final Programmatic Agreement: Section 2

Last week we briefly discussed Section 1 of the Final Programmatic Agreement, attempting to revisit what this all means. Today, we look at section two of the PA to extract some additional observations to help further demystify and understand this document.

Time to stipulate

Section 2, which runs between 11 and 12 pages, is labelled the "stipulation" section, and outlines the process, decision, and behavioral guardrails of signatories to the "agreement." Twenty different subsections are contained in this section and they are: 1) standards, 2) other agreements, 3) area of potential effects, 4) training and testing reviews, 5) general mitigation measures, 6) documentation, 7) identification of historic properties, 8) discoveries and emergencies, 9) general stipulations, 10) review, 11) objections, 12) resolving objections, 13) amendment, 14) extensions, 15) termination, 16) failure to carry out agreement, 17) duration, 18) anti-deficiency act, 19) severability, 20) execution of this programmatic agreement.

How many people really understand each of these subsections? Does each subsection reflect some, several, or most concerns of our ancient Chamorro Pacific Islander civilization? Do villagers really understand what the Final PA is all about? If the answer is "no" or "maybe" or "kind of" to any of these questions, then additional public hearings and public conversations should continue along with discussions on how to introduce additional changes to the document.

Notes on some particulars

Several American national legal statutory references are cited that include the following: Anti-Deficiency Act; 36 CFR 800.3 through 800.13; 36 CFR Part 63 & Part 800; National Register of Historic Places; Archeology and Historic Preservation; Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines, 48 FR 44716-42; National Historic Preservation Act Sections 304, 106 and 110(f), Archeological Resources Protection Act; Traditional Cultural Property; and the Secretary of the Interior's Historic Preservation Professional Qualification Standards, 62 FR 33712 & 33708.

The standards, general mitigation measures, discoveries and emergencies, general stipulations, and the resolving objections subsections take up most of this second section of the Final PA. Shorter subsections like training and testing reviews are tied to Appendix A, and we need to carefully look at this because Appendix A has a tremendous amount of information that is not adequately summarized in the Final PA.

The central question to ask is "do our families, friends, acquaintances and associates readily understand these statutes and guidelines?" This section looks like a lawyer's dream, full of information that can be used to dissuade and confuse many of our people. What frameworks, if any, have villagers been able to insert into the document?

What's odd, what's omitted

What is odd is that not one government of Guam law is cited in Section 2. What is odd is that federal statutes alone are used to define matters such as who is or is not qualified to conduct cultural studies, what constitutes documentation requirements, and what training actions are fully covered and satisfied by federal law. What is odd is that the military is obligated to meet PA stipulations contingent upon receiving money from an unnamed appropriated funding source.

What is odd is that the word "Chamorro" is not mentioned once in the document. What is odd is that no references are made to seeking the deep knowledge and expertise of our umku, who are the experts on our Chamorro language and culture. What is odd is that while this document is called a "programmatic agreement," it doesn't necessarily show that anything was authentically negotiated and mutually agreed upon between our ancient Chamorro Pacific Islander people and the American national government.

Original intent: Readily understood or clear as mud?

Do our people really understand the original intent of why a Final PA was established in the first place? How many of our families and friends understand how to convert and translate this vague document into a specific, tangible, and common sense understanding of how the air, terrestrial sub surfaces, sea, reefs, land and the ancient plants, trees, fish, and rare human cultural corridors will be damaged or destroyed? Do we really understand how having a Final PA and this Section 2 preserves and protects our total environmental and Chamorro human and cultural resource corridors? Why are there no stipulations discussing what kinds of pollution will be produced? Do we truly understand the first, second, and third order consequences that may or may not have occurred from having the original Final PA lapse in 2019?

If the answer is "maybe" or "sort of," we need to pick up where we left off and continue to ask questions to understand and demystify what precisely this Final PA document is all about once again.

Demystify to understand, understand to empower

The second section of the Final PA provides ample evidence and reason to have this document redone, reworked, reset, and maybe even retweeted. Language that fully reflects and gives long term advantage to our ancient and rare Chamorro cultural, environmental, and human resource concerns needs to be added. Most of the 20 subsections give too much control and power to the military. The Guam Mayors Council, the Guam Legislature, villagers, the Chamorro people, and the Guam Governor are not mentioned once in this second section, yet the admiral who is identified as "CJRM" is mentioned close to 50 times.

Not one government of Guam law is referenced or mentioned in Section 2 and not one locally produced method to address villager, or fisherman concerns is outlined. Yet American national laws are mentioned approximately 31 times and no glossary of terms was inserted into this Final PA document. What, for example, are the specific detailed definitions of major training exercises, data recovery plans, public involvement, unit level training, JRP cultural resources manager, and geographic information systems?

So far, this Final PA looks and smells like a representation of how American colonial military statecraft engages in un-democracy and political control of the Chamorro people of Guam, using American national statutory frameworks to further justify actions and behaviors associated with preparing for war.

'RICK'S COLUMN'

By RICK PEREZ
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Rick Perez used to serve in the U.S. military and has work experiences in public policy research and public affairs. He is passionate about national security and geopolitics and runs a newsletter called Guam Affairs at guamaffairs.substack.com. For questions or comments, contact Perez at rickp7839@gmail.com.

'Good dad,' bad senator: Cowardly Sen. Ted Cruz blames Cancun caper on his daughters

By LEONARD GREENE
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

I have an aunt who lives in Houston. And to be honest, it has been quite a while since I went down there to visit.

It's not like she hasn't invited me. I just have lots of excuses, including being a bad nephew.

I do remember that on my last trip there, it was more than 100 degrees outside, for several days in a row. Our biggest concern in those hot and sticky days was how long it would take to get from my air-conditioned rental car to her air-conditioned apartment.

It was 14 degrees in Houston the other day, followed by treacherous snowstorms that paralyzed the city, shutting down roads, freezing pipes and knocking out power.

Suffice it to say I'm not going to visit my aunt right now. But I figured the least I could do is give her a call and see how she's making out.

"Oh, I had to get out of there," she told me. "I'm in Las Vegas. I came here for Valentine's Day, and I haven't even thought about going back."

I'm sure her neighbors are jealous. I'm sure they wish they could get away like her and leave the icy roads and frozen pipes behind.

But there's something you should know about my father's youngest sister, something that should give her jealous neighbors pause.

She is not a U.S. senator. She doesn't represent the entire state of Texas. No one expects her to stick around in the middle of a statewide crisis that is affecting hundreds of thousands of people.

She is not Ted Cruz.

Ted Cruz is a coward who runs away from a crisis and blames it on his daughters.

"With school cancelled for the week, our girls asked to take a trip with friends," Cruz said after pictures of him on a plane bound for Cancun, Mexico flooded the internet. "Wanting to be a good dad, I flew down with them last night and am flying back this afternoon."

After the social media backlash, Senator Good Dad admitted the trip was a mistake. He also admitted he was really planning to stay until Saturday.

Cruz's crazy Cancun caper was every bit as bad as New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie's decision to soak in the summer sun on his private beach on one of the hottest days of the year in 2017 after he and the state Legislature closed public beaches over a silly budget dispute.

Okay. Cruz's getaway was worse. There were actually lives at stake. That's not to say that Cruz should be climbing utility poles and fixing power lines.

But would it hurt for him to go to a homeless shelter in Houston and pour some hot chocolate?

I asked my aunt what she thought about Cruz and his decision to abandon the state in the middle of a crisis.

A slot machine was singing in the background. Ice cubes were melting in her glass.

She said she wasn't even thinking about Ted Cruz or how he was weathering the storm. She'll worry about all that when she gets back.

Leonard Greene is a columnist and reporter for the New York Daily News.

RUSH

From Page 8

Was he also a part of the coarsening of America?

Yes, he was.

Did he sometimes damage the public dialogue more than he fed it?

Yes.

Did he insult those who disagreed with him?

Often.

And was he often wrong?

Like all of us, yes.

But he also mellowed with age and illness, and he usually listened to the arguments of the other side (the better to dismantle them), and he was a genuine patriot.

And, like I.F. Stone on the left, he did afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted.

Liberals don't see that because they don't see themselves as powerful or comfortable and they don't see the former autoworker who is now a security guard as afflicted. They don't see him at all.

Half of America will shrug at this man's death and say, "Farewell to a right-wing primitive."

But the other half knows in its collective heart that Rush Limbaugh was a giant of his kind and genuinely grieves the loss of their tribune.

If the two Americas could recognize each other's feeling and opinions, if we could see each other, we would be a better country.

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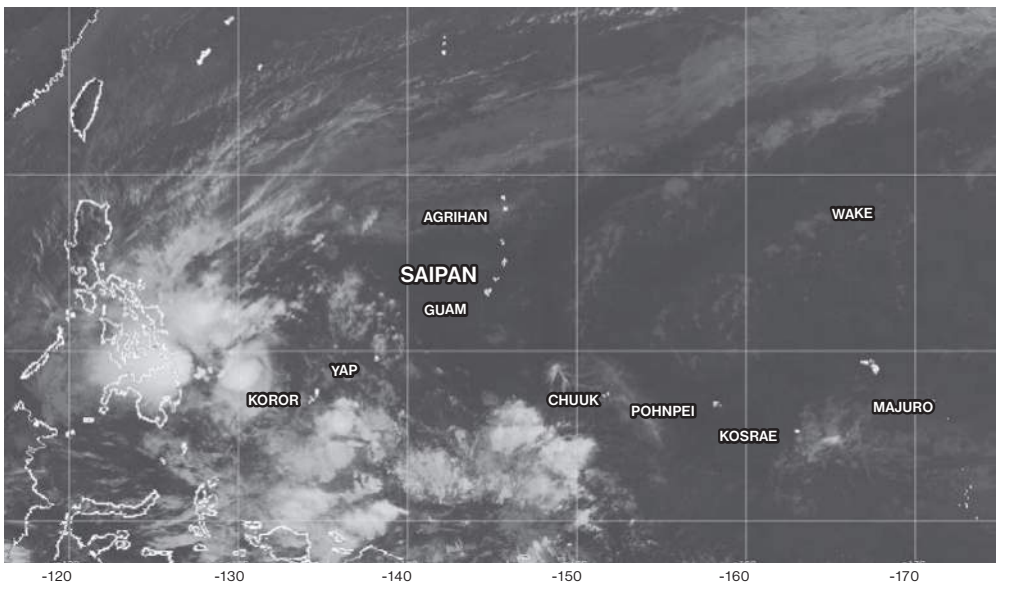
The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
Partly cloudy with isolated light showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated light showers. East winds 10 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with a 10 percent chance of light showers.	Partly cloudy with a 10 percent chance of light showers.	Partly cloudy with a 10 percent chance of light showers.
86º 76º	86º 76º	87º 77º	87º 77º	86º 76º

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 7:53 AM, SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2021

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Satellite shows dry air, sinking over the Marianas, which will provide clearer than usual skies and drier than usual weather today. The buoys reveal 7 to 8 feet combined seas composed mainly of northwest swell from a cold front that moved off Japan last week and east swell from trade winds north of the Marshall Islands.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

MICRONESIA	▲ ▼ °F	
Guam and Rota	Partly Cloudy	86º / 77º
Palau	Partly Cloudy	85º / 78º
Yap	Thunderstorm	85º / 78º
Chuuk	Thunderstorm	84º / 79º
Pohnpei	Thunderstorm	84º / 80º
Kosrae	Thunderstorm	84º / 80º
Majuro	Partly Cloudy	85º / 80º

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:38 AM	6:22 PM
Tuesday	6:37 AM	6:23 PM
Wednesday	6:37 AM	6:23 PM
Thursday	6:36 AM	6:23 PM
Friday	6:36 AM	6:23 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	2:10 AM	1:39 PM
Tuesday	-	3:04 AM	2:31 PM
Wednesday	-	3:58 AM	3:27 PM
Thursday	-	4:50 AM	4:26 PM
Friday	-	5:41 AM	5:25 PM

AROUND THE GLOBE	▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Partly Cloudy	73º / 64º
Beijing	Partly Cloudy	46º / 23º
Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	46º / 23º
Honolulu	Showers	81º / 67º
London	Showers	48º / 37º
Los Angeles	Sunny	59º / 42º
Manila	Partly Cloudy	91º / 75º
Melbourne	Partly Cloudy	86º / 63º
Miami	Partly Cloudy	80º / 74º
New York	Partly Cloudy	66º / 54º
Osaka	Showers	45º / 34º
Paris	Showers	45º / 30º
Busan	Partly Cloudy	46º / 30º
Rome	Mostly Cloudy	52º / 37º
Salem	Partly Cloudy	79º / 63º
San Francisco	Sunny	50º / 38º
Seoul	Partly Cloudy	39º / 21º
Tokyo	Cloudy	46º / 34º
Washington, DC	Partly Cloudy	51º / 49º

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
5:37 AM	High Tide	1.39
10:03 AM	Low Tide	1.16
2:40 PM	High Tide	1.44
10:38 PM	Low Tide	-0.07

STOP THE SPREAD

The Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. continue to encourage residents within the Marianas to practice social distancing, which means avoiding close contact with people in order to avoid catching the virus yourself and to avoid passing it on to others.

- Stay home as much as possible. Avoid unnecessary travel or public places.
- Avoid social gatherings in groups of more than 10.
- Choose drive-thru, take-out, or delivery options, or outdoor seating, if available, when dining in.
- Send only one healthy adult from the household run necessary errands, such as getting groceries or picking up medications. Leave children, elderly, and other vulnerable people at home as much as possible. When returning home from an errand, wash your hands before doing anything else.
- Older adults and people with chronic medical conditions are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness. People at high risk should stay at home as much as possible.
- Create a household plan of action, https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/checklisthousehold-ready.html
- Ensure a 30-day supply of all medicines.

Continue good hand hygiene

- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, avoid touching your face, cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not readily available.

Know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and what to do if you become symptomatic

- Stay home when you are sick and if you recently traveled to a place with COVID-19. Self-quarantine means:
- ❑ Choosing a room in your house that can be used to separate sick household members from others.
- ❑ Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- ❑ Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- ❑ Limiting visitors

CHCC appreciates the patience and understanding of the community at this time. To obtain general information about the CNMI COVID-19 response, contact the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force Hotline at 287-0046, 287-0489, 287-1089. These numbers are available Monday to Sunday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For medical information about COVID-19, reach out to the COVID-19 Infoline at the following numbers: 285-1672/1352. These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For mental health support and helpful tips during a crisis, call the Mental Health Support Line at 285-1856, 323-6560, 323-6561 These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30 pm. For the 24/7 Disaster Distress Helpline, call SAMSHA at 1-800-985-5990.

For more information about DIY face coverings, visit https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html

For more information about CHCC programs, follow CHCC on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter at @cnmichcc, check out our website at www.chcc.gov.mp or call us at (670) 234-8950.

For more information on the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force, visit www.governor.gov.mpand, follow @GovernorCNMI on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

This health advisory may be found online at http://www.chcc.gov.mp/pressrelease.html and at www.governor.gov.mp/covid-19.

Rumor control

During crises like this, oftentimes the spread of misinformation is just as dangerous as the virus itself. The CNMI is reminded to only share official and verified notices, press releases, and advisories from the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and CHCC.

Source: Office of the Governor

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF FEBRUARY 1, 2021

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA117	6:55am	7:35am	1, 6
UA117	7:00am	7:40am	4

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

UA117/183	6:55am	9:50pm	1 via Guam

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

UA183	8:00pm	9:50pm	1, 3, 5

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	5:10am	5:51am	1, 6
UA174	5:15am	5:56am	4

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA184/174	10:55pm	5:56am+1	3 via Guam
UA184/174	10:40pm	5:51am+1	5 via Guam

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

UA184	10:40pm	4:30am+1	5
UA184	10:55pm	4:40am+1	1, 3

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 9, 2021

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1301	8:30AM	9:00AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
1302	11:00AM	11:30AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri/Sat
1303	3:30PM	4:00PM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri/Sun

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3101	9:30AM	10:00AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
3102	12:00AM	12:30AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri/Sat
3103	4:30PM	5:00PM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri/Sun

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3401	12:15	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
4301	13:00	13:30	Temporarily Unavailable

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1201	7:00	7:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1202	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	10:00	10:15	Daily
1205	11:00	11:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1206	12:00	12:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1207	13:00	13:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1208	14:00	14:15	Daily
1209	15:00	15:15	Daily
1210	16:00	16:15	Daily
1211	17:00	17:15	Daily
1212	17:00	17:15	Temporarily Unavailable

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
2101	7:30	7:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2102	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	10:30	10:45	Daily
2105	11:30	11:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2106	12:30	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2107	13:30	13:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2108	14:30	14:45	Daily
2109	15:30	15:45	Daily
2110	16:30	16:45	Daily
2111	17:30	17:45	Daily
2112	18:30	18:45	Temporarily Unavailable

Vessel operator, 2 engineers convicted of illegal oil waste discharge, fined $3M

A vessel operating company was sentenced Friday in Hagatna, Guam, for illegally discharging oil into Apra Harbor, Guam, and for maintaining false and incomplete records relating to the discharges of oily bilge water from the vessel *Kota Harum*.

Pacific International Lines (Private) Limited (PIL), chief engineer Maung Maung Soe, and second engineer Peng Luo Hai admitted that oily bilge water was illegally dumped from the *Kota Harum* directly into the ocean and into Apra Harbor, Guam, without being properly processed through required pollution prevention equipment. Oily bilge water typically contains oil contamination from the operation and cleaning of machinery on the vessel. The defendants also admitted that these illegal discharges were not recorded in the vessel's oil record book as required by law.

"This case was particularly egregious as it not only involved oily waste discharges out at sea, but also in the Port of Guam itself," said acting assistant attorney general Jean E. Williams of the Justice Department's Environment and Natural Resources Division. "I'd like to thank the stevedores at the Port of Guam who reported the oil discharge to authorities. The Department of Justice and our partner agencies will continue to ensure that polluters who threaten our natural resources are held fully accountable under the law."

"This case demonstrates our continued commitment to enforcing federal environmental laws in our districts," said U.S. Attorney Shawn N. Anderson of the Districts of Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands. "We will not allow our waters to be dumping grounds for vessel owners and their crews. The substantial penalties imposed by the court are a strong measure of accountability for these unconscionable acts."

"This case is a strong example of how the U.S. Coast Guard environmental protection missions safeguard our shared natural resources," said Josh Empen, deputy commander, Coast Guard Sector Guam. "We are very thankful to have an expert team of pollution investigators, port state control examiners, and Coast Guard Investigative Service agents who are dedicated to the mission and allowed referral of the case to the U.S. Attorney. I would also like to thank the professional men and women of the Port Authority of Guam who reported the illegal discharge to the National Response Center."

On Oct. 4, 2019, Hai, who was employed by PIL, used the *Kota Harum's* emergency fire/ballast pump to discharge oily bilge water directly overboard, leaving an oil sheen upon the water of Apra Harbor. Soe, who was also employed by PIL, admitted that excessive leaks in the vessel caused oily bilge water to accumulate in the vessel's engine room bilge at a rate that exceeded the oil water separator's (required pollution prevention machinery) processing capacity.

Rather than repairing these leaks before continuing to sail or storing the oily bilge water in holding tanks to be discharged to shore-side reception facilities, it was the routine practice onboard the *Kota Harum* to discharge the oily bilge water directly overboard into the ocean. Soe then failed to record these improper overboard discharges in the vessel's oil record book. Additionally, Soe admitted that he altered the vessel's sounding log so that it would appear as though oily bilge water was being stored in the vessel's holding tank instead of being pumped overboard.

PIL pleaded guilty to five felony violations of the Act to Prevent Pollution from Ships for failing to accurately maintain the *Kota Harum*'s oil record book, and one felony violation of the Clean Water Act for knowingly discharging oil into a water of the United States in a quantity that may be harmful. The judge sentenced PIL to pay a total criminal penalty of $3 million and serve a four-year term of probation, during which all vessels operated by the company and calling on U.S. ports will be required to implement a robust Environmental Compliance Plan.

Soe and Hai previously pleaded guilty and were sentenced to two years of probation and one year of probation, respectively. Additionally, both Soe and Hai are prohibited from serving as engineers onboard any commercial vessels bound for the United States during their respective terms of probation.

This case was investigated by the U.S. Coast Guard Sector Guam and the U.S. Coast Guard Investigative Service. The case was prosecuted by Trial Attorney Stephen Da Ponte of the Environment and Natural Resources Division's Environmental Crimes Section and Assistant U.S. Attorney Marivic P. David for the Districts of Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands. ***(PR)***

NMTI awarded $10.3M to build workforce training facility

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration is awarding a $10.3 million grant to the Northern Marianas Technical Institute to support workforce education and training through the construction of a new facility to house the school's trades program. This EDA grant is expected to create 410 jobs, retain 385 jobs, and generate $2 million in private investment.

"EDA is pleased to support Northern Marianas Tech's construction of its new workforce career training facility," said Dennis Alvord, acting assistant secretary of Commerce for Economic Development. "This project will help the Northern Mariana Islands respond to the economic impact of Super Typhoon Yutu by boosting training opportunities for citizens looking to compete for high-skill, high-wage jobs."

"We are very thankful to the Economic Development Administration for their support of our workforce education and training needs here in the CNMI," said Gov. Ralph DLG Torres. "Local workforce development has always been my top priority, and this project will help us build a modern facility that will support the goals of our new NMTI board of trustees, led by [chair] Mario Valentino, on expanding educational offerings like construction and culinary and ultimately assist our residents get jobs within our community."

"NMTI applied for this federal aid in September 2019, so it will be welcome news that the Biden administration is ending their long wait," said Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (Ind-MP). "Together with the recently announced grants to Northern Marianas College, EDA is confirming that investing in education is key to recovery from Super Typhoon Yutu and the pandemic and one of the best ways for us to build back better."

The project will fund the construction of a building to house classrooms and office space for NMTI's trades programs, as well as ancillary infrastructure including roadway improvements and on-site parking. The new facility will be constructed to withstand future adverse weather events and will include a back-up generator, water storage tank, and typhoon shutters for all its glass windows.

This project is funded by the Additional Supplemental Appropriations for Disaster Relief Act of 2019 (Public Law 116-20), which provided EDA with $600 million in additional Economic Adjustment Assistance Program funds for disaster relief and recovery for areas affected by hurricanes Florence, Michael, and Lane, typhoons Yutu and Mangkhut, wildfires, volcanic eruptions, and other major natural disasters occurring in calendar year 2018, and tornadoes and floods occurring in calendar year 2019, under the Robert T. Stafford Act. ***(PR)***

Guam contractor pays 43 Filipino workers $202K in back wages

HAGATNA, Guam—Forty-three Filipino construction workers will be paid a total of $202,390 in unpaid overtime wages that Asian Construction Development Corp. in Guam owes these employees, soon after the U.S. Department of Labor investigated the case.

The department's Wage and Hour Division investigators found that the general contractor employer failed to pay the workers overtime when they worked more than 40 hours in a workweek. The division recovered $202,390 in unpaid overtime wages and assessed the employer $29,971 in civil money penalties for the willful nature of the violations found.

Investigators found the contractor paid workers for their first 40 hours each week by check, and recorded these payments in their payroll records. However, Asian Construction Development Corp. paid for any overtime hours employees worked in cash, at straight-time rates, and kept a separate, unreported record of these overtime hours.

"Employers must record and pay workers for all of the hours they work, including overtime," said Wage and Hour Division district director Terence Trotter in Honolulu. "The workers in this case left their home countries to work for this employer, and deserved to be paid every penny they have legally earned."

The division offers numerous resources to ensure employers have the tools they need to understand their responsibilities and to comply with federal law, such as online videos and confidential calls to local Wage and Hour offices. Learn more about the FLSA. Contact the Wage and Hour Division toll-free at 866-4US-WAGE (487-9243) for more information. ***(PR)***

NMC offers flexible learning support services in pandemic

Despite the limitations and challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, Northern Marianas College continues to engage its students by offering a flexible and broad array of services such as online tutoring and mentoring, academic activities, and financial literacy seminars.

Project PROA, a project funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions, aims to help students succeed in high school and college, especially during the pandemic. The program provides tutoring services in a variety of subjects, including English, math, science and other courses. The program also provides mentoring, or guidance from peer mentors to be successful in college.

The services are available on-campus for students that prefer face-to-face learning (by appointment) or virtually through Zoom (appointment or drop-in). The program also holds academic, STEM, financial literacy, and mentorship activities both on-campus and virtually for students.

"Prior to the closure of the campus last March, the program prepared for the shift to virtual learning by training its tutors and mentors on how to provide tutoring and mentoring virtually, and by shifting our services and activities to fit the virtual platform," said Hedwig Hofschneider, director of Project PROA.

Project PROA tutor Francine Rago, right, tutors a student at the Northern Marianas College library. NMC

Project PROA also offers activities which encourage science, technology, engineering, and mathematics areer exploration and financial literacy education. We aim to prepare students not just for their college journey, but for life after graduation as well.

"The program was flexible in its delivery of services to adapt to the situation and help our students to continue their classes, and designed its activities and workshops to support students—whether it was tips on how to learn better online, or activities to cope with stress," Hofschneider said.

"Now that the community is safer than it was last spring, the program is offering on-campus tutoring and mentoring for those that learn better in person, but still offers virtual services for those that continue to prefer virtual learning." ***(NMC)***

QUAKE BRIEFS

4.9-magnitude quake in Pagan region

At 10:41am on Feb. 21, 2021 a report of a 4.9-magnitude earthquake occurred in the Pagan region at 18.360°N 146.550°E. Currently, there are no tsunami warnings or advisories that were issued by the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center. For more information, contact the EOC State Warning Point at 237-8000. ***(PR)***

4.7-magnitude quake in Pagan region

At 12:38am on Feb. 20, 2021 a report of a 4.7-magnitude earthquake occurred in the Pagan region of the Northern Mariana Islands. Currently, there are no tsunami warnings or advisories issued by the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center. For more information, contact the CNMI EOC State Warning Point at 237-8000. ***(PR)***

Business

20-40% sale starts at Casa Décor

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Unlike most bargain stores, Casa Décor swears by the quality of the product it sells. Also unlike high-end furniture shops on Saipan, customers of Casa Décor don't need to break the bank to buy the excellent pieces they need for their homes.

And as a big thank you to the island community, the one-year-old furniture shop between Bank of Hawaii and LJ's Grocery along Middle Road is having an anniversary sale where most items are 20% off and select items can be had at 30-40% discount.

MARK RABAGO

Casa Décor is located between Bank of Hawaii and LJ's Grocery along Middle Road.

Casa Décor was established in October 2019 after its owner had difficulty obtaining good quality but not ridiculously priced furniture in the local market.

During this eureka moment, he thought, "If I'm having a hard time buying the good quality furniture I want at the price I can afford, others may also be having the same experience. Why not open a furniture to cater to all our needs then?"

Fortunately, Casa Décor found itself a good furniture supplier from the onset and this made the furniture shop a sort of go-to place not only for private residents but also many island businesses that are upgrading their interiors.

"On Saipan 80-90% of retailers and wholesalers get their supplies from China. It all depends on sourcing. If you find a good supplier, of course you'll get good products," the owner said. "Since we opened a year and a couple of months ago, we've always been known for our good quality furniture. We have affordable prices and in terms of quality we have everyone beat."

Like other businesses on island, Casa Décor also had had its share of COVID-19 horror stories, as the pandemic forced it to operate for only 3-4 hours a day that drastically hurt its bottom line.

"We were only open in the mornings and though only a few customers were coming in we still kept ourselves open because we wanted to maintain our service for the people," the owner said.

That began to change when the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force lifted restrictions and lowered the Community Alert Level to Code Blue in the middle of last year. Casa Décor also got a bit of windfall from the stimulus and Pandemic Unemployment Assistance and Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation money that started coming in.

"Business started recovering when PUA, FPUC, and stimulus checks began flowing to the CNMI. People again made purchases but still not at pre-COVID-19 levels yet."

Aside from being a furniture shop, Casa Décor is also a hardware store and sells mostly finishing products like toilet, bathrooms cabinets, tiles, mirrors with lights, fans, and even pots for plants.

Recently, Casa Décor received its long-awaited order for home LED lights that serve more as chandeliers than home illumination.

"We've been open for more than a year already but some people still don't know about our shop. Our new and very ornate LED lights hopefully will address the problem as we plan to display them near our windows so it can attract new customers," the owner said.

Casa Décor's customers may be few compared to other furniture stores on Saipan, but it's definitely a very loyal and growing list.

"Customers that do come eventually become repeat customers and even recommend us to their family and friends. Everything we sell here we want our customers to be very satisfied because of the quality and the thought that we gave them something good to buy and enjoy."

Casa Décor is open from 9am and 5pm Monday-Saturday and from 9am and 12:30pm on Sunday. For more information, call 235-8899.

MARK RABAGO

Case Décor recently received its shipment of ornate interior LED lights.

MARK RABAGO

Casa Décor has high quality furniture at relatively friendly prices.

Docomo Pacific remains committed to enhancing its CNMI network

Docomo Pacific, the regional leader in innovation, telecommunications, and entertainment, delivers stronger network in CNMI.

The company's network and field operations teams have been hard at work implementing significant network upgrades that offer enhanced coverage and redundancy to improve service reliability. Redundancy is the process of adding additional instances of network devices and lines of communication to help ensure network availability. With these upgrades, customers can enjoy quality mobile network coverage in more corners of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota and an even better customer experience.

Here is a list of key network upgrades and what they mean for you:

1. Established cell site protection ring:

■ In the event a cell site goes offline, service from a nearby cell site will act as a back-up. This means you will not experience any downtime.

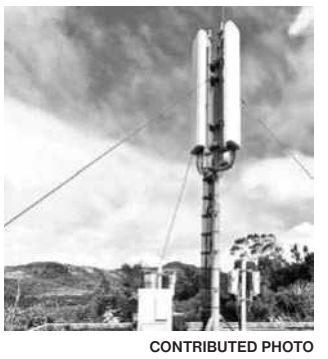
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Docomo Pacific's new 4G antenna installed at Koblerville.

2. Established cell site fiber transport ring:

■ If a main fiber connection is cut, there will be another backup fiber route that will automatically transfer your connection without any downtime.

3. Strengthened the durability of our network towers



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Docomo Pacific's new 4G antenna installed at Papago

■ Reduce the damage and service interruption caused by typhoons.

3. Installed more 4G antennas to provide increased coverage

■ Our latest antennas were installed at Capitol Hill, Dandan, Garapan, Kagman, Koblerville, Marpi, Papago, and San Vicente; while ongoing improvements are taking place on Tinian and Rota.

4. Installed new Power cabinets in Saipan:

■ Better cooling for equipment coupled with an improved battery system will provide longer back-up power in the event of a power outage.

Stay tuned for more updates on how we are growing stronger together.

Docomo Pacific is a wholly owned subsidiary of NTT Docomo Pacific, Japan's leading mobile operator. Headquartered in Tamuning, Guam, Docomo Pacific is the largest provider of personal, residential, enterprise connectivity and entertainment services in Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands. Named Guam's most reliable network, based on GWS' 2019 OneScore ranking. Docomo Pacific is also the five-time winner of Pika's Best of Guam and four-time winner of Best of The Pacific. Docomo Pacific is dedicated to bringing you and your family closer to the things that matter most. Get to know more about what makes us "Better Together" at www.docomopacific.com. ***(PR)***

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Airlines plan to ask passengers for contact-tracing details

WASHINGTON (AP)—The U.S. airline industry is pledging to expand the practice of asking passengers on flights to the United States for information that public health officials could use for contact tracing during the pandemic. An industry trade group said Friday that the carriers would turn over the information to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which could use it to contact passengers who might be exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19. Delta and United have been doing that since December. On Friday, an industry trade group said that American, Southwest, Alaska, JetBlue and Hawaiian will also ask passengers to make their names, phone numbers, email and physical addresses available to the CDC. The airlines had long resisted government efforts to require them to gather passenger information and provide it to health agencies. They said they don't have the information on passengers who buy tickets from other sellers such as online travel agencies..

Senator seeks probe of natural gas price spikes during storm

WASHINGTON (AP)—A Democratic senator is calling for federal investigations into possible price gouging of natural gas in the Midwest and other regions following severe winter storms that plunged Texas and other states into a deep freeze that caused power outages in millions of homes and businesses. Minnesota Sen. Tina Smith says natural gas spot prices spiked as high as 100 times typical levels, forcing utilities and other natural gas users to incur exorbitant costs, many of which were passed on to customers. In a letter sent Saturday to federal regulators, Smith said the price spikes will not just harm consumers, but could "threaten the financial stability of some utilities that do not have sufficient cash reserves to cover their short-term costs in this extraordinary event." The letter was sent to the Energy Department, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and the Commodities Futures Trading Commission. A copy of the letter was obtained by The Associated Press. The extreme weather spurred residents from Mississippi to Minnesota to crank up electric heaters and pushed demand for electricity beyond the worst-case scenarios planned for by grid operators. At the same time, many gas-fired power plants in Texas and other states were knocked offline because of icy conditions, and some plants appeared to suffer fuel shortages as natural gas demand spiked nationwide. More than 70 deaths across the U.S. have been blamed on the storms.

Nation

AS COLD SNAP EASES GRIP

Frozen pipes, electric woes remain

DALLAS (AP)—Warmer temperatures spread across the southern United States on Saturday, bringing relief to a winter-weary region that faces a challenging clean-up and expensive repairs from days of extreme cold and widespread power outages.

In hard-hit Texas, where millions were warned to boil tap water before drinking it, the warm-up was expected to last for several days. The thaw produced burst pipes throughout the region, adding to the list of woes from severe conditions that were blamed for more than 70 deaths.

By Saturday afternoon, the sun had come out in Dallas and temperatures were nearing the 50s. People emerged to walk and jog in residential neighborhoods after days indoors. Many roads had dried out, and patches of snow were melting. Snowmen slumped.

Linda Nguyen woke up in a Dallas hotel room Saturday morning with an assurance she hadn't had in nearly a week: She and her cat had somewhere to sleep with power and water.

Electricity had been restored to her apartment on Wednesday. But when Nguyen arrived home from work the next evening, she found a soaked carpet. A pipe had burst in her bedroom.

"It's essentially unlivable," said Nguyen, 27, who works in real estate. "Everything is completely ruined."

Deaths attributed to the weather include a man at an Abilene health care facility where the lack of water pressure made medical treatment impossible. Officials also reported deaths from hypothermia, including homeless people and those inside buildings with no power or heat. Others died in car accidents on icy roads or from suspected carbon monoxide poisoning.

Roughly half the deaths reported so far occurred in Texas, with multiple fatalities also in Tennessee, Kentucky, Oregon and a few other Southern and Midwestern states.

A Tennessee farmer died trying to save two calves from a frozen pond.

President Joe Biden's office said Saturday he has declared a major disaster in Texas, directing federal agencies to help in the recovery.

U.S. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a New York Democrat, tweeted Saturday that she helped raise more than $3 million toward relief. She was soliciting help for a Houston food bank, one of 12 Texas organizations she said would benefit from the donations.

The storms left more than 300,000 still without power across the country on Saturday, many of them in Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi.

More than 50,000 Oregon electricity customers were among those without power, more than a week after an ice storm ravaged the electrical grid. Portland General Electric had hoped to have service back to all but 15,000 customers by Friday night. But the utility discovered additional damage in previously inaccessible areas.

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown ordered the National Guard to go door-to-door in some areas to check on residents' welfare. At its peak, what was the worst ice storm in 40 years knocked out power to more than 350,000 customers.

In West Virginia, Appalachian Power was working on a list of about 1,500 places that needed repair, as about 44,000 customers in the state remained without electricity after experiencing back-to-back ice storms Feb. 11 and Feb. 15. More than 3,200 workers were attempting to get power back online, their efforts spread across the six most affected counties on Saturday.

In Wayne County, West Virginia, workers had to replace the same pole three times because trees kept falling on it.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott met Saturday with legislators from both parties to discuss energy prices as Texans face massive spikes in their electric bills after wholesale energy prices skyrocketed while power plants were offline.

"We have a responsibility to protect Texans from spikes in their energy bills" resulting from the weather, he said in a statement.

Water woes added misery for people across the South who went without heat or electricity for days after the ice. Snow storms forced rolling blackouts from Minnesota to Texas.

Robert Tuskey was retrieving tools from the back of his pickup truck Saturday afternoon as he prepared to fix a water line at a friend's home in Dallas.

"Everything's been freezing," Tuskey said. "I even had one in my own house … of course I'm lucky I'm a plumber."

Sheriff: 3 dead in gun store shooting in New Orleans suburb

METAIRIE, La. (AP)—A person entered a gun store and shooting range in a New Orleans suburb and fatally shot two people Saturday, prompting customers and staff to open fire on the shooter, a sheriff said. The shooter also died.

The shooting happened around 2:50 p.m. at the Jefferson Gun Outlet in the suburb of Metairie, according to a release from the Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office.

Sheriff Joseph Lopinto said the shooter initially struck two people inside, and then several other people—whether employees or store customers—opened fire on the shooter, both inside and outside of the building. Outside the building a man could be seen afterward behind yellow police tape yelling "Where is my son?"

Guns and ammunition are sold in the front of the outlet that faces a main thoroughfare through Jefferson Parish. Customers who want to frequent the gun range generally go around to the side entrance of the building. Staff who work there often wear a sidearm.

Lopinto said two other people also were hit by gunfire and were hospitalized in stable condition. He said there were multiple shooters in all and investigators had just begun trying to piece together what had happened.

"We're trying to put it all together," the sheriff said during a short briefing with journalists.

None of the dead or wounded were immediately identified and details remained sketchy. Lopinto said that the investigation was continuing as authorities sought to determine exactly what occurred.

Tyrone Russell and Wanetta Joseph were both in a conceal-and-carry course at the store when they heard what they both described as rapid firing. They said the gunfire sounded much louder than the usual muffled shooting that they are used to hearing inside the shooting range.

"We heard the gunshots and the screaming," said Russell. "When the police came, they escorted us out. I could see glass everywhere … It was just like a really scary scene."

World

A man is carried after police dispersed protesters in Mandalay, Myanmar on Saturday, Feb. 20, 2021. AP

2 Myanmar protesters shot dead by riot police

MANDALAY, Myanmar (AP)—Riot police in Myanmar shot dead two anti-coup protesters and injured several others on Saturday, as security forces increased pressure on popular revolt against the military takeover.

One of the victims was shot in the head and died immediately during the latest rally in the second-largest city of Mandalay, according to Frontier Myanmar, a news and business magazine. Another was shot in the chest and died en route to a hospital.

Several other serious injuries were also reported. The shootings occurred near Mandalay's Yadanabon dock, where tear gas, rubber bullets, water cannons and slingshots were used on protesters earlier Saturday.

The Irrawaddy news website also confirmed the deaths on social media.

At least five people were injured by rubber bullets and were carried away in ambulances, according to an Associated Press journalist who witnessed the violence.

Some 500 police and soldiers descended on the area after dock workers joined the national civil disobedience movement, refusing to work until the military junta that seized power in a Feb. 1 coup reinstates the democratically elected government led by Aung San Suu Kyi.

Protesters and residents fled the neighborhood amid the violence and security forces chased after them.

There were reports of sounds that resembled gunfire. A group of journalists also was forced to flee after being hit with tear gas and slingshot projectiles.

Earlier in the week in Mandalay, security forces cracked down on state railway workers in a similar fashion.

Across Myanmar, protests showed no signs of slowing down despite the crackdown—including a sixth consecutive night in which the internet was cut for many hours.

Demonstrators also gathered elsewhere in Yangon, the biggest city, chanting and holding placards and images of Suu Kyi, who remains under house arrest.

On Sunday, Facebook announced it took down the page run by the Myanmar military information unit "for repeated violations of our community standards prohibiting incitement of violence and coordinating harm."

Earlier Saturday, protesters paid tribute to a young woman who died a day earlier after being shot by police during a rally in the capital, Naypyitaw.

An impromptu memorial created under an elevated roadway in Yangon attracted around 1,000 protesters. A wreath of bright yellow flowers was hung beneath a photograph of Mya Thwet Thwet Khine, who was shot on Feb. 9, two days before her 20th birthday.

Moscow court rejects opposition leader Navalny's appeal

MOSCOW (AP)—A Moscow court on Saturday rejected Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny's appeal of his prison sentence, even as the country faced an order from a top European rights court to free the Kremlin's most prominent foe.

A few hours later, a judge in a separate case ordered Navalny to pay a fine for defaming a World War II veteran.

During the first court hearing, Navalny urged Russians to stand up to the Kremlin in a fiery speech mixing references to the Bible and "Harry Potter."

Navalny, 44, an anti-corruption crusader and President Vladimir Putin's most vocal critic, was arrested on Jan. 17 upon returning from Germany, where he spent five months recovering from a nerve-agent poisoning that he blames on the Kremlin. Russian authorities have rejected the accusation.

Earlier this month, Navalny was sentenced to two years and eight months in prison for violating terms of his probation while convalescing in Germany. He appealed the sentence and asked to be released. A Moscow City Court judge instead reduced the prison sentence to just over 2 1/2 years, deducting a month-and-a-half that Navalny spent under house arrest in early 2015.

The sentence stems from a 2014 embezzlement conviction that Navalny has rejected as fabricated and the European Court of Human Rights has ruled to be unlawful.

Navalny has been held in Moscow's Matrosskaya Tishina prison, but Russian news reports said that after losing his appeal, he would likely be sent to a prison in the western part of Russia within the next few days to serve out his sentence.

His arrest and imprisonment have fueled a huge wave of protests across Russia. Authorities responded with a sweeping crackdown, detaining about 11,000 people, many of whom were fined or given jail terms ranging from seven to 15 days.

Health & Wellness

This advertorial is sponsored by Tan Holdings HEALTH IS WEALTH Tan Siu Lin Foundation

5 natural ways to relieve stress

By KIERSTEN WILLIS
THE ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION

During these uncertain times, stressful feelings may be increasing.

If you're looking for ways to unwind naturally, here are five methods of doing it from CNN.

Practice meditation

Meditating allows you to focus your mind for a while and practice being present.

"You can spend one minute each morning and each evening doing this," Richard Davidson, founder and director of the Center for Healthy Minds, told CNN. "And that kind of appreciation is something that can foster a sense of optimism about the future."

If you've never meditated before, Headspace has some resources for how to get started.

Get adequate exercise

Regular exercise is one of the main ways to improve your physical and mental health.

"A brisk walk, jog or bike ride can help keep you calm and healthy during these uncertain times," Jennifer Helsz, an associate professor in kinesiology at McMaster University in Ontario, Canada told CNN.

You don't have to do high-intensity exercise for a long time to reap the benefits, either. A study of university students showed high-intensity training led to increased stress and inflammation. Cleveland Clinic has some examples of moderate exercise, which you can do to de-stress.

Do some yoga, tai chi and qi gong

You can also get moving through yoga. The practice can release endorphins, improve sleep and regulate the body's central stress response system Jacinta Brinsley, a doctoral candidate at the University of South Australia who recently published a study on yoga, told CNN.

If you're new to the practice, Self magazine has some go-to poses for beginners.

Traditional Chinese exercises, tai chi and qi gong, also have stress-relieving qualities including lowering the hormone cortisol and improving immune function, studies show.

Make sure you're sleeping

Relieving stress also means getting enough sleep. To do so, develop a routine and follow experts' advice of going to bed and waking up at the same time each day.

Avoid scrolling on your phone or watching TV before bed, as blue light can disrupt your sleep. You can also unwind with a warm bath or shower and read a book before catching some Z's, but don't consume alcohol or coffee as a nightcap—they can be disruptive.

Breathe slowly and deeply

Deep breathing can be a way to ease your mind.

"Learning breathwork lets you know that you have an ability to physiologically calm yourself," stress management expert Dr. Cynthia Ackrill, an editor for the American Institute of Stress's magazine Contentment told CNN.

For tips on how to incorporate breathing exercises into your day, visit Healthline.

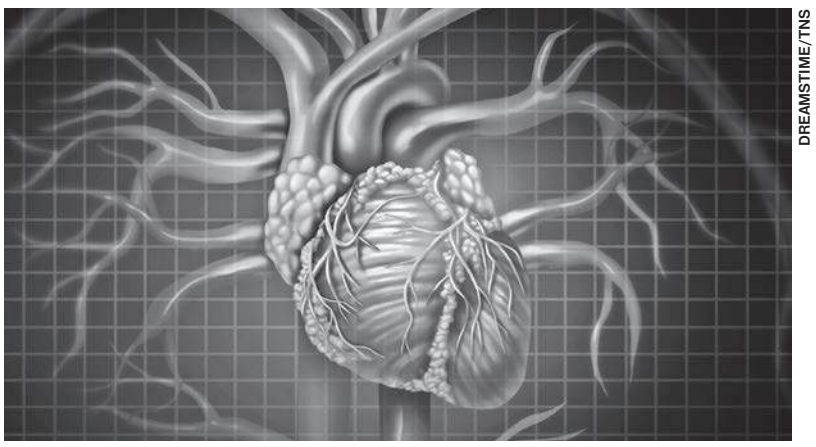
How cholesterol affects your heart

Most people know that high cholesterol is bad for their heart, but few people really understand what cholesterol is. Dr. Claire Haga, a Mayo Clinic family physician, explains why it's so closely related to heart problems. She also discusses the power you have to control it.

We see it listed on food labels and hear health care professionals talk about it, but few people know what cholesterol actually is.

"You do need cholesterol to help with healthy brain formation. However, there is bad cholesterol, and this is what actually builds the plaques in our arteries," Dr. Haga says. "And that's where we get concerned."

Cholesterol is a waxy substance that's found in the fats in your blood. When you have high cholesterol, you may develop fatty deposits in your blood vessels, which eventually could make it difficult for enough blood to flow through your arteries.



DREAMSTIME/TNS

Most people know that high cholesterol is bad for their heart, but few people really understand what cholesterol is.

"So that bad cholesterol, when those plaques build, if they rupture, they can ... cause a heart attack or even a cause a stroke," Dr. Haga says.

Dr. Haga says what you eat affects your cholesterol levels, so you have some power to control it.

"Examples of transfats, a lot of this is going to be your products that are prepackaged, sometimes things like donuts and cookies," Dr. Haga says. "There are things that are made with shortening, fast foods, fried foods. [You should] really try ... to eliminate those."

You also want to cut back on saturated fats that often are found in animal products, such as bacon or butter.

Dr. Haga says you also can lower your cholesterol when you take in more omega-3, which is the good fat that you find in fish, nuts and avocado. Getting more whey protein in your diet also can lower your cholesterol. ***(Mayo Clinic News Network)***

HEALTHY LIVING

All about spinach

While spinach is often touted as a good source of iron, it is actually richer in vitamin A.

Content of 3.5 oz. (100 g) of spinach

	Iron, mg	Vitamin A, IU*
Frozen, boiled	2	12,000
Canned	2.3	9,800
Raw	2.7	9,400
Fresh, boiled	3.6	10,500

*International units

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, TNS Photo Service

Life & Style

It's final: Harry and Meghan won't return as working royals

LONDON (AP)—Buckingham Palace confirmed Friday that Prince Harry and his wife, Meghan, will not be returning to royal duties, and Harry will give up his honorary military titles—a decision that makes formal, and final, the couple's split from the royal family.

When Harry and Meghan stepped away from full-time royal life in March 2020, unhappy at media scrutiny and the strictures of their roles, it was agreed the situation would be reviewed after a year.

Now it has, and the palace said in a statement that the couple, also known as the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, have verified "they will not be returning as working members of the Royal Family. "

It said Queen Elizabeth II had spoken to 36-year-old Harry and confirmed "that in stepping away from the work of the Royal Family, it is not possible to continue with the responsibilities and duties that come with a life of public service."

The palace said Harry's appointment as captain general of the Royal Marines and titles with other military groups would revert to the queen before being distributed to other members of the family.

Harry served in the British army for a decade, including on the front line in Afghanistan, and retains a close bond with the military. He founded the Invictus Games competition for wounded troops, which first was held in 2014 at London's Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park.

'Kimye' is no more: Kardashian files to divorce West

LOS ANGELES (AP)—"Kimye" is kaput.

Kim Kardashian West filed for divorce from Kanye West Friday after 6 1/2 years of marriage, court records show. The move brings an impending end to one of the most followed celebrity unions of the 21st century—the marriage of a reality TV superstar and a hip-hop and fashion phenomenon with four kids, a vast fortune to split and even more fame.

Kardashian is seeking joint custody of the children and her filing states the couple have a prenuptial agreement that will determine how their assets will be divided. It cites irreconcilable differences for their breakup and does not list a separation date.

The couple began dating in 2012 and had their first child in 2013. West proposed later that year using the giant screen at the empty waterfront ballpark of the San Francisco Giants, and the two married May 24, 2014, in a ceremony at a Renaissance fortress in Florence, Italy.

The beginning of the end of the marriage comes after the September announcement that the show that made her family's name, "Keeping Up With The Kardashians," was coming to an end in 2021 after 14 years.

It was the first marriage for the West, 43, and the third for Kardashian, 40. While the union wasn't long, it outlasted the predictions of many cynics who thought doom was inevitable given the two oversized personalities, West's well-known volatility and the fact that Kardashian's previous marriage, to former NBA player Kris Humphries, was fleetingly brief.

Kardashian's first marriage at age 19 in 2000 to music producer Damon Thomas lasted until 2004, and in 2011, she married Humphries in a heavily hyped wedding that was televised in a two-part special on "Keeping Up With the Kardashians."

She filed for divorce less than three months later, though was still legally married in 2012 when she and West, a friend for years who had paid tribute to her in his songs, became a couple, and she became pregnant.

PHOTO BY EVAN AGOSTINI/INVISION/AP, FILE

FILE - Kanye West, left, and Kim Kardashian attend the WSJ. Magazine Innovator Awards on Nov. 6, 2019, in New York. Kim Kardashian West filed for divorce Friday, Feb. 19, 2021, from Kanye West after 6 1/2 years of marriage. Sources familiar with the filing but not authorized to speak publicly confirmed that Kardashian filed for divorce in Los Angeles Superior Court. The filing was not immediately available.

Since the Humphries divorce, Kardashian has retained the services of perhaps the best-known divorce attorney in the country, Laura Wasser, dubbed the "Disso Queen" after representing clients that include Angelina Jolie, Johnny Depp and Britney Spears. Wasser filed the divorce Friday in Los Angeles Superior Court. It was first reported by celebrity website TMZ.

Kardashian is a Los Angeles-area lifer, but West is from Chicago and spends much of his time, including many of the latter months of the marriage, at his ranch in Wyoming, and has said he wants his kids with him there.

Their four children are all 7 or under: North, age 7, Saint, age 5, Chicago, age 3, and Psalm, 21 months old.

Both Kardashian and West have have parlayed their initial fame—his for being a sought-after hip-hop producer and the rapper behind "Stronger" and "Gold Digger," hers for becoming a reality TV star on a par with a movie star—into bigger endeavors, and have amassed considerable wealth with it.

West's Yeezy fashion line, with its pricey clothing and coveted Adidas sneakers, has become as much part of his life and persona and his music. Kardashian went from famous socialite to major businesswoman, with mobile apps and games in her name, along with beauty products and clothes.

Police eye Marilyn Manson in domestic violence investigation

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Detectives are investigating allegations of domestic violence against rocker Marilyn Manson involving incidents that occurred about a decade ago in West Hollywood, authorities said Friday.

The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Special Victims Bureau opened the investigation after a woman approached authorities to report the allegations, sheriff's Lt. John Adams said. The incidents reportedly occurred between 2009 and 2011, when Manson lived in the city of West Hollywood.

"Our people are just in the very beginning stages of an investigation into this," Adams said. He would not describe the allegations or say when the woman came forward.

Word of the investigation came less than three weeks after actor Evan Rachel Wood publicly accused Manson, her ex-fiancé, of sexual and other physical abuse, alleging she was "manipulated into submission" during their relationship.

Adams declined to identify the woman who contacted the Sheriff's Department, as is typical in domestic violence cases.

Manson, 52, whose real name is Brian Warner, has denied Wood's allegations as "horrible distortions of reality."

Wood, 33, who stars on HBO's "Westworld," had previously spoken about being abused in a relationship but did not name the person until she detailed the allegations on Instagram on Feb. 1.

"The name of my abuser is Brian Warner, also known to the world as Marilyn Manson," Wood said. "He started grooming me when I was a teenager and horrifically abused me for years."

Prominent Greek actor-director arrested, charged with rape

ATHENS, Greece (AP)—A well-known Greek stage actor and director has been arrested on rape charges, police say.

Dimitris Lignadis, 56, turned himself in Saturday afternoon at Athens police headquarters, Greek Police spokesman Theodoros Chronopoulos told the Associated Press. Lignadis, 56, was being held pending an appearance before a magistrate.

According to media reports, at least three people have made allegations against Lignadis, including a 25-year-old man who accused him of having raped him in 2010.

Lignadis has denied the accusations.

Rumors of his alleged sexual misconduct swelled in recent weeks, leading to Lignadis' resignation two weeks ago as artistic director of Greece's National Theater, a post he had held since 2019.

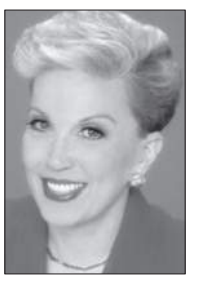
Revelations earlier this year by an Olympic gold medalist that she had been raped by a sailing federation official back in 1998 have sparked a #MeToo movement reckoning in Greece.

Treasured wedding arch is trashed by callous relatives

DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

FROM UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE



Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

DEAR ABBY: My daughter got married in a friend's backyard three months ago. Her husband built an arch for the ceremony. He spent $285 on some very nice walnut, and they planned to keep it forever.

With my daughter's consent, my wife loaned it to a niece of hers. The arch was broken and thrown out. We found this out only after weeks of requesting that we get it back. They have offered to pay the $285, but without even a "sorry."

My daughter is extremely angry at my wife and the niece and her husband. I need words to console my wife and daughter. This has caused a deep emotional schism in our family.

WEDDING MESS IN ARIZONA

DEAR MESS: It is time to talk to your daughter about priorities. Because of her deep emotional attachment to the arch her now-husband created for their wedding, her anger and hurt are justifiable.

That the niece and her husband not only damaged it but threw it away like a piece of garbage was terrible. That they not only didn't apologize, but also failed to recognize the sentimental value of the arch is shocking. (At least they offered to reimburse the cost of the wood.) However, for your daughter to blame your wife for the niece's carelessness is wrong.

It takes strength of character to forgive. This does not mean your daughter must forget what happened and how poorly it was handled. In the uncertain times we are experiencing, relationships and family unity are primary. I hope that, with time, your daughter and her husband will realize this and repair the rift while recognizing the niece's shortcomings in the future. ("Neither a borrower nor a lender be ...")

■ ■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: At the end of last year, I sat down with my parents hoping that maybe we could approach the new year with a fresh start. One short month into the new year, my mother is back at it again, ridiculing me and making me feel like no matter what I do, it will never be good enough for her.

I have reached the end of my rope. I'm tired of dealing with the constant cycle of emotional abuse. I have overcome much in my life, and I'm proud of myself for it. During times when I struggle, I reflect on how much. I keep pushing myself forward, but at this point, I'm just tired.

I have considered distancing myself, but the recent loss of my grandfather hit me hard. I have been leaning on my family to keep myself going, so I'm in a pickle.

HURT, STUNNED AND TIRED IN NEW YORK

DEAR H.S.T: You may never be able to have what you want from your mother, not because there is something wrong with you, but because she has proven herself incapable of being supportive.

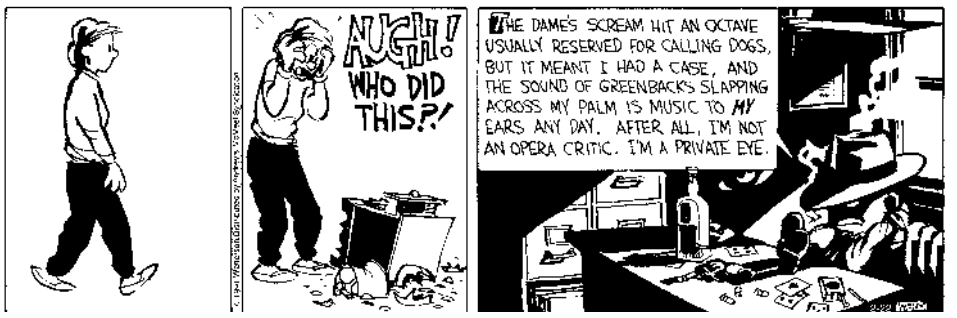
For understanding and the emotional support you are seeking, consider contacting your clergyperson (if you have one) or the officiant at your grandfather's funeral and asking about joining a grief support group. If you do, you may find the support you need while at the same time keeping safely at a distance from your mother.

What teens need to know about sex, drugs, AIDS and getting along with peers and parents is in "What Every Teen Should Know." Send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Teen Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

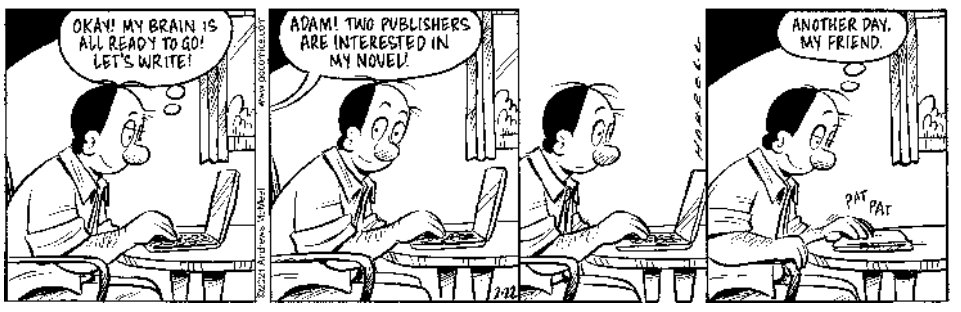

AUGH! WHO DID THIS?!
THE DAME'S SCREAM HIT AN OCTAVE USUALLY RESERVED FOR CALLING DOGS, BUT IT MEANT I HAD A CASE, AND THE SOUND OF GREENBACKS SLAPPING ACROSS MY PALM IS MUSIC TO MY EARS ANY DAY. AFTER ALL, I'M NOT AN OPERA CRITIC. I'M A PRIVATE EYE.

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

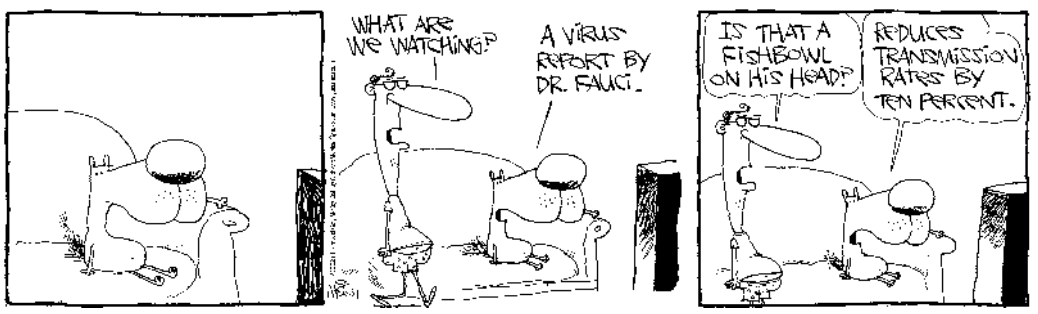
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset



The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy



CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Hexagonal state
5 Joke
8 Europe's neighbor
12 Conference leader?
13 Peanut product
14 "Once — a time ..."
15 Austen heroine
16 Dress rehearsal
18 Meager
20 Cook slowly in liquid
21 Roe provider
23 Fish propeller
24 Film lengths
28 Corvette roof option
31 Rock's Brian
32 "Get —!"
34 Jargon suffix
35 Mattress option
37 Not yet apprehended
39 Pop's mate
41 Commotion
42 Frightens
45 Released
49 "Scoot!"
51 "That's — ask"
52 Termini
53 "Humbug!"
54 Snitch
55 "The — the limit!"
56 Pvt.'s superior
57 Gusto

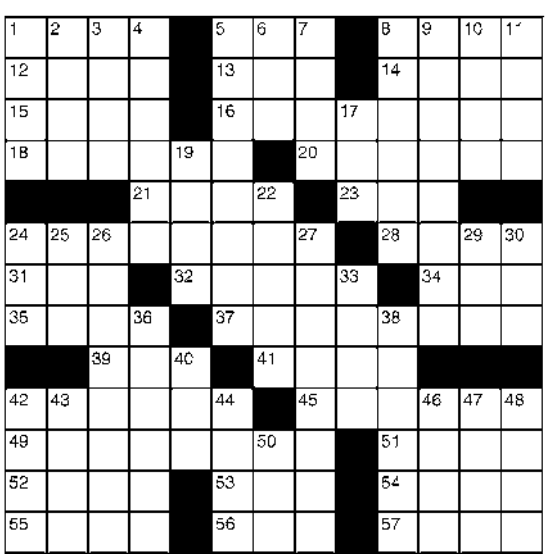
DOWN

1 Sporty trucks, briefly
2 Office part-timer
3 — mater
4 "Citizen Kane" inspiration
5 Pep rally shout
6 Vacuum's lack
7 Smooth-talking
8 One way to serve café
9 Track competitor
10 Debtors' notes
11 Novelist Rice
17 Canine cry
19 Actor LaBeouf
22 Bruce and Laura
24 Game official
25 Numerical prefix
26 Allied landing site on D-Day
27 "Don't move!"
29 Buckeyes' sch.
30 Signing need
33 Greek consonants
36 Quagmire
38 Faux
40 CCV x X
42 War god
43 Galoot
44 Weeps
46 Fonda's beekeeper role
47 Jazzy Fitzgerald
48 Pickling herb
50 Pester

Solution time: 26 mins.

A	T	L	■	L	O	E	B	■	M	A	I	L
D	R	F	■	A	M	M	O	■	C	M	N	I
D	I	N	O	S	A	U	H	■	H	O	K	U
S	M	O	O	T	H	■	O	I	O	■	■	■
■	■	■	H	E	A	■	D	A	N	L	B	E
B	L	E	E	D	■	G	I	G	■	R	E	E
A	U	L	D	■	S	U	N	■	B	A	L	L
N	A	E	■	R	T	S	■	C	E	L	T	S
C	U	C	K	O	O	■	T	O	M	■	■	■
■	■	■	A	N	O	■	E	N	A	C	T	S
G	U	R	U	■	D	I	N	G	D	I	N	G
A	S	E	A	■	I	K	E	A	■	T	U	T
S	E	M	I	■	N	E	T	S	■	E	T	S

Last Friday's Answer 02/22



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Drew Barrymore, 46; Jeri Ryan, 53; Kyle MacLachlan, 62; James Hong, 92.

Happy Birthday: Find your place, and live in the moment. Enjoy what life has to offer. Set a realistic pace that brings you the comfort and joy you deserve. Update the way you live, how you handle your money and personal matters, and aim to secure your position and status. Stop doubting, and start discovering what's important to you. Your numbers are 4, 11, 20, 27, 31, 34, 45.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* Refuse to let your emotions interfere when making a decision. Stay calm, use discipline and verify facts before you take action. Put your energy into something original you want to pursue that will help avoid discord. ✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* Alter your life for the right reason. Your aim should be in your best interest, not trying to impress or please someone. Push your ideas and vision, and invest time and effort into pursuing what makes you happy. ✪✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* Recognize what's possible, and success will follow. Your future depends on your ability to discard negativity and letting your innovative ideas set new trends. Promote peace and love; you'll defuse anger and discord. Make romance and love priorities. ✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* Be a vessel for information. An open mind will encourage you to try something new. Express your thoughts and feelings. Share something special with someone who can contribute to your plans. A legal contract or partnership looks promising. ✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* Stay on course; you will make progress. Look for the right opportunity and put everything into your objective. If you take on too much, you will fall short of your goal. Use intelligence, bring about change and persuade others to follow suit. ✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* Information, education and communication will lead to positive changes. Focus on your relationship with your peers and what you have to offer to get ahead. Adapting to what's trending will draw attention and help you excel. Don't be afraid to make the first move. ✪✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Don't let an unexpected change bring you down. Look for the silver lining and proceed. Take advantage of any opportunity that comes your way, and let your positive attitude transform your dream into a reality without compromising your financial status or health. ✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* Don't let uncertainty or confusion be your demise. Look at the possibilities and use your skills to bring about the changes that will make your life better. Put an end to bad relationships, outside interference and responsibilities that don't belong to you. ✪✪✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* Settle into something you do well or love to do. Opening up to someone you love will help you make decisions that add to your comfort and well-being. Don't let others make decisions for you. Ask questions, and follow your heart. ✪✪✪

CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* Consider how you earn and handle your cash, and make amendments that will stabilize your financial future. Look at what's trending and how you can take advantage of an opportunity to use your skills and services efficiently and effectively. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* Weigh the pros and cons of every situation you face. Be careful when dealing with peers, relatives and people who work for institutions. Choose your words carefully, and agree only to changes that will not compromise you in any way. ✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* Make your space inviting. Move things around to suit your lifestyle. Share with people you love, and build better relationships and a strong foundation for whatever you want to pursue. Make self-improvements and show affection to loved ones. ✪✪✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are kind, passionate and original. You are content and resourceful.

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

3	6			7		9		2
					5	1		7
1	9			6	8			
	7	3		1				
9		1				2		8
				5		4	7	
			1	8			9	3
5		9	6					
8		4		9			2	6

Difficulty Level ★ 2/22

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Last Friday's Answer

7	3	1	5	8	2	6	4	9
8	9	6	1	4	3	5	7	2
5	2	4	7	9	6	1	8	3
3	4	8	9	6	1	2	5	7
2	1	7	4	3	5	9	6	8
9	6	5	2	7	8	4	3	1
6	7	9	3	2	4	8	1	5
1	8	2	6	5	7	3	9	4
4	5	3	8	1	9	7	2	6

Difficulty Level ★★★★

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

JOGGERS Solution: 10 letters

T	K	E	L	K	N	A	W	O	F	L	E	E	C	E
R	H	Y	Z	O	C	G	N	I	N	I	A	R	T	T
O	A	G	R	T	R	A	V	E	L	N	R	M	N	E
F	K	T	I	E	B	R	A	E	G	E	I	I	D	X
M	I	V	H	E	D	A	E	R	T	N	R	L	A	T
O	E	K	S	L	W	I	N	G	E	P	I	P	N	U
C	R	O	P	A	E	T	O	D	N	Ⓜ	M	W	C	R
S	F	I	I	S	E	T	H	R	Ⓨ	U	E	V	E	E
T	N	S	W	S	B	L	I	Ⓖ	B	Z	O	E	N	S
R	T	E	L	A	U	S	A	C	I	M	G	L	O	I
E	A	I	G	N	K	H	P	S	O	L	E	C	S	C
T	M	G	I	O	C	O	U	O	T	T	O	R	A	R
C	Y	H	D	N	A	R	B	T	R	I	T	O	E	E
H	T	O	L	C	R	T	I	N	K	T	C	O	S	X
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Active, Adjust, Ankle, Athletic, Baggy, Band, Brand, Bump, Casual, Cloth, Comfort, Cotton, Cozy, Crop, Dance, Denim, Elastic, Embroidery, Exercise, Fleece, Gear, Gym, Khaki, Knit, Lightweight, Linen, Loose, Lounge, Mid, Print, Season, Sewing, Shorts, Size, Slim, Soft, Sports, Stretch, Stylish, Sweat, Texture, Thin, Track, Training, Travel, Tread, Velcro, Waist

Last Friday's Answer: Clean

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Heat hold off depleted Lakers in finals rematch

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Although the Miami Heat's road trip started slowly, Kendrick Nunn thinks they are picking up steam because of a team chemistry that is growing at every stop.

The Heat even kept it together to pull out a win over the defending NBA champions despite a fourth quarter that nearly went wrong.

Nunn scored 27 points, Jimmy Butler had 24 points and eight rebounds, and Miami held off the Los Angeles Lakers 96-94 Saturday night in an NBA Finals rematch.

Bam Adebayo had 16 points and 10 rebounds for the Heat in the teams' first meeting since the Lakers won their 17th championship with a six-game victory over Miami in the Florida bubble four months ago. The Heat scored only 15 points in the fourth quarter, but they held the Lakers to 17 and hung on when Alex Caruso missed a long jumper at the buzzer.

"You can tell that the chemistry is building," said Nunn, who hit five 3-pointers. "We've been together for a week and a half, and it just gives us more of a feel for each other. We're moving in the right direction now. We dropped a couple early, but we're starting to give ourselves the best chance at the end of the game."

The victory was Miami's second straight following a three-game skid during this seven-game road trip. The defending Eastern Conference champions (13-17) have been under .500 since Jan. 12, but their confidence is growing.

"We're seeing progress the last few weeks," coach Erik Spoelstra said. "I think our defensive mental toughness was better in this game to get some stops when we weren't able to knock down some shots in the fourth quarter."

LeBron James had 19 points, nine assists and nine rebounds as the champs lost their second straight game without starters Anthony Davis and Dennis Schröder.

James stole the Heat's inbounds pass with 8.4 seconds left to create one last chance for the Lakers, but the 17-time All-Star passed out of a double team to Caruso, who capped his scoreless 20-minute night by missing.

"We're figuring out how to play without one of our creators in Dennis and one of our stars in AD," Caruso said. "That's going to take a little time, and obviously we don't have practice time."

Davis missed his third straight game after aggravating his strained right calf last weekend, and Schröder missed his second straight under the NBA's health and safety protocols.

The injury absences don't account for the Lakers' shooting woes over the last 10 games, including a 39% performance against Miami. LA missed five of its last six shots, including Wesley Matthews' rushed, off-balance 3-pointer with 15 seconds left.

"We're going to continue to work on our habits and be great for each other," James said. "We all put in the work, so it's not that. The law of averages will even itself out. We had lapses last season, and we had them during the playoffs. We know they'll even them out over the course of the year."

Miami Heat forward Jimmy Butler, left, shoots as Los Angeles Lakers guard Wesley Matthews defends during the first half of an NBA game Saturday, Feb. 20, 2021, in Los Angeles. AP

Hornets 102, Warriors 100

In Charlotte, Draymond Green lost his cool and the Golden State Warriors lost another game.

After Green picked up two technical fouls and was ejected with 9.3 seconds left for arguing the outcome of a jump ball, Terry Rozier hit an off-balance jumper from the left corner as time expired to give the Hornets a victory.

Rozier finished with 36 points, his fourth straight 30-point game.

The Warriors were leading by two when officials ruled Hornets coach James Borrego had called a timeout as Gordon Hayward came down with the jump ball. Green immediately began jumping around the court, screaming at players and officials arguing that the Warriors had tied up Hayward as he was falling to the floor and it should have resulted in another jump ball.

Rozier sank two free throws for the technical fouls to tie it, then hit the winner.

"He crossed the line, that's the main thing," Warriors coach Steve Kerr said about Green, who has a history of in-game outbursts. "We love his passion and his energy and we would not be the team we are without him. But that doesn't give him license to cross the line—and he knows that."

Head official Marc Davis said after the game Green's first technical foul was assessed for directing profanity at an opposing player and taunting, and the second technical was for directing profanity at a game official.

The incident overshadowed another huge night for Rozier, who had 20 points in the fourth quarter. Rozier is averaging 37.5 points over the last four games for the Hornets.

P.J. Washington finished with 15 points to help the Hornets overcame a season-high 25 turnovers to beat the Warriors without Stephen Curry.

Curry went through warmups but was a late scratch after he became ill. The team said the illness is not COVID-19 related and that Curry was "just not feeling well."

Suns 128, Grizzlies 97

In Memphis, Devin Booker scored 23 points, hitting five of Phoenix's franchise-record 24 3-pointers in a romp over short-handed Grizzlies.

Mikal Bridges added 19 points, making 6 of 7 shots overall and 4 of 5 from long range. Cam Payne also had 19 points, a season high, and Chris Paul added 16 points and six assists.

Phoenix won for the eighth time in nine games. The Suns made 22 3-pointers Friday night in New Orleans in a game where they outscored the Pelicans 41-12 in the fourth quarter in a 132-114 victory.

Bulls 122, Kings 114

In Chicago, Zach LaVine scored 38 points and Chicago beat Sacramento.

The Bulls bounced back after getting dominated by Joel Embiid in a tight loss at Eastern Conference-leading Philadelphia on Friday night.

Sacramento's Marvin Bagley III tied a season high with 26 points and had 11 rebounds.

Doncic surprised on Lillard's All-Star snub

TEXAS—Dallas Mavericks star Luka Doncic was named a starter for the All-Star Game next month, something that left many fans both surprised and even angry that he got the nod over Portland Trail Blazers star Damian Lillard.

Doncic, shockingly, is also one of those people.

"I didn't expect that I was going to start this game," Doncic said Saturday, via ESPN's Tim MacMahon. "I know that maybe [Damian] Lillard deserved it more than me."

Lillard, of course, is in the midst of a tremendous season.

The Trail Blazers star is averaging 29.8 points and 7.7 assists—both almost career-highs—so far this season, and has kept Portland in contention despite significant injuries to both C.J. McCollum and Jusuf Nurkic.

The now six-time All-Star, though, didn't make the cut for a starting spot which left Portland fans very upset.

Lillard, however, seemed to take the news well.

"When I was younger I cared a lot more," Lillard said Friday via NBC Sports. "Obviously, that's an accomplishment to be an All-Star starter. It's something that I haven't done, so of course, I would like to have been named the starter, but I honestly wasn't surprised.

"I wasn't upset about it. I don't even have cable at my house right now. So I was sitting there feeding my kids and people started calling me."

While Doncic sounds apologetic for getting the start, he has no reason to be. Undoubtedly, the Mavericks guard has earned his spot.

The 21-year-old is averaging a career-high 29.1 points, 9.4 assists and 8.6 rebounds so far this season in Dallas. Those figures easily live up to the MVP hype he received coming into the year, yet the Mavericks are just 13-15 on the year—something that many thought should give the edge to Lillard.

Dallas has started to turn things around, though, and has won five of its last seven.

In the end, it really doesn't matter. Both Doncic and Lillard are headed to Atlanta for the All-Star Game. And based on Lillard's comments, he isn't giving the starting lineup any of his attention.

Meanwhile, LeBron James and Kevin Durant were revealed Thursday as the leading fan votegetters in the Western and Eastern Conferences for the All-Star Game, meaning they'll be captains for the matchup in Atlanta on March 7. James will start for the 17th time, extending his record, and Durant is an All-Star for the 11th time. ***(NBC)***

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic	W	L	PCT	GB
Philadelphia	20	10	.667	0.0
Brooklyn	19	12	.613	1.5
Boston	15	14	.517	4.5
Toronto	15	15	.500	5.0
New York	14	16	.467	6.0
Central				
Milwaukee	17	13	.567	0.0
Indiana	15	14	.517	1.5
Chicago	13	16	.448	3.5
Cleveland	10	20	.333	7.0
Detroit	8	21	.276	8.5
Southeast				
Charlotte	14	15	.483	0.0
Miami	13	17	.433	1.5
Atlanta	12	17	.414	2.0
Orlando	12	18	.400	2.5
Washington	9	17	.346	3.5

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Pacific				
LA Clippers	22	9	.710	0.0
LA Lakers	22	9	.710	0.0
Phoenix	19	10	.655	2.0
Golden State	16	15	.516	6.0
Sacramento	12	17	.414	9.0
Southwest				
San Antonio	16	11	.593	0.0
Memphis	13	13	.500	2.5
Dallas	13	15	.464	3.5
New Orleans	12	17	.414	5.0
Houston	11	17	.393	5.5
Northwest				
Utah	24	6	.800	0.0
Portland	18	10	.643	5.0
Denver	16	13	.552	7.5
Oklahoma City	11	18	.379	12.5
Minnesota	7	23	.233	17.0

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

One Grand Slam at a time for Osaka

AUSTRALIA—Japan's Naomi Osaka promised Saturday not to be weighed down by "pressure and expectation" after her latest Grand Slam victory sparked talk she could end up winning 10 majors.

The 23-year-old won her fourth Slam from the last eight she's contested with the comfortable 6-4, 6-3 victory over Jennifer Brady in 77 minutes at Rod Laver Arena.

She becomes only the third player after Monica Seles and Roger Federer to win their first four major finals, and will now rise to second in the world rankings.

The Japanese sensation is now seen as the dominant force in women's tennis, a view shared by seven-time Slam-winner Mats Wilander, who believes Osaka can win 10 Grand Slams.

"I'm taking it in sections. For right now, I'm trying to go for five," Osaka said, when asked about Wilander's comment.

"After five I would think about maybe dividing the 10, so maybe seven or eight.I don't like to take things big-picture," Osaka added. "For me, I like to live in the moment. It's an honor that he said that. But I don't want to weigh myself down with pressure and expectations.

Osaka already is a star at age 23. Aside from the four Grand Slam titles, she also has record-breaking endorsement deals and the willingness to speak her mind to prove it.

Now the question is: Where does she go from here?

It was telling that the second question posed to Osaka at the news conference following her victory over Brady—after she took a sip of celebratory bubbly that she said made her "feel a little bit funny"—was about turning in better performances at Wimbledon and the French Open.

Japan's Naomi Osaka holds the Daphne Akhurst Memorial Cup aloft after defeating United States' Jennifer Brady in the women's singles final at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia, Saturday, Feb. 20, 2021. AP

After all, each of her major championships so far came on hard courts at Melbourne Park (2019, 2021) or the U.S. Open (2018, 2020). She never has been past the third round at the All England Club or Roland Garros.

Even more revealing was Osaka's response.

Asked whether her first non-hard-court Slam trophy will come on clay or grass, she said: "Hopefully clay, because it's the one that's sooner."

She is not about biding her time or patient improvement.

And she's been thinking about where she needs to improve.

"It was one of her goals this year to play well outside of the hard courts. She's still very young. It's time to grow on those surfaces. She also believes she can do well and, I'm sure, with the right preparation, with a few, maybe, tactical (and) technical adjustments, we're going to do well," said her coach, Wim Fissette. "She's the person that wants to grow."

Part of what makes Osaka special is embracing challenges and knowing what she stands for.

That's been the case off the court and on.

With a racket in her hand, it's about, as Fissette put it, being able to "love big matches and big moments."

Osaka wanted to face 23-time major champion Serena Williams in the semifinals, for example.

No fear there.

"She was like when I bring my kids to the toy store: They are very excited. And Naomi was excited to go on court with Serena. It's just beautiful to see," Fissette said. "At the end, this is what you train for, right? To be on the biggest stage with the best player of all time, Serena."

Away from the game, Osaka says, it took time to find her voice and express her views.

She was born in Japan to a Japanese mother and Haitian father, and she moved to the United States when she was 3. Last August, she was the first tennis pro to join athletes from other sports in walking out to protest the police shooting of a Black man in Wisconsin.

"Before I am an athlete," Osaka tweeted at the time, "I am a black woman."

On her way to the U.S. Open title in September, Osaka wore masks bearing the names of seven Black victims of violence to draw attention to racism and police brutality.

On Saturday, Osaka was asked whether there was a message she wanted associated with her latest triumph, which made her 4 for 4 in Slam finals.

"Honestly, for me, when everything happened in New York, I got really scared, because I felt like it put me into this light that was a non-athletic light that I've never been in before," she said. "So I feel like there is a lot of topics that people suddenly started asking me about that I completely didn't know about at all. For me, I only like to talk when I'm knowledgeable about the subject or at least know, like, one tiny grain of what I'm about to start talking about. So for me, I just came into this tournament just thinking purely about tennis."

And yet, in the aftermath of winning the trophy, she was ready to think about a larger role, too.

Many looked at her win against Williams as a passing of the mantle. Osaka also won their meeting in the 2018 U.S. Open final—who could forget that one?—and has eclipsed the 39-year-old American as the highest-earning female athlete because of millions in sponsorship deals.

But to Osaka, Williams is still, and always will be, an idol and an inspiration, a player whose example she wanted to follow.

And the best way to repay that, Osaka figures, is to hold that role for others.

"Hopefully I play long enough to play a girl that said that I was once her favorite player or something," Osaka said. "For me, I think that's the coolest thing that could ever happen to me. ... That's how the sport moves forward." ***(AP/NBC)***

Mets sign Walker, move Syndergaard to 60-day IL

NEW YORK (AP)—The New York Mets have transferred right-hander Noah Syndergaard to the 60-day injured list to make room for righty Taijuan Walker, who finalized a $20 million, two-year contract Saturday.

The Mets announced the moves Saturday night, ensuring Syndergaard won't return to the rotation until at least June as he comes back following Tommy John surgery last March.

Walker's deal also includes a player option for 2023.

The 28-year-old Walker joins a rotation headed by two-time Cy Young Award winner Jacob deGrom. New York's need for a pitcher increased with the loss of Seth Lugo, who will miss the start of the season following elbow surgery Tuesday to remove a bone spur.

New owner Steven Cohen has displayed a willingness to spend, retaining Marcus Stroman with an $18.9 million qualifying offer and acquiring Carlos Carrasco from Cleveland in a trade along with All-Star shortstop Francisco Lindor for a rotation also projected to include David Peterson.

Walker has a five-pitch repertoire with a 93 mph fastball mixed among sliders, split-finger fastballs, sinkers and curveballs.

He was 4-3 with a 2.70 ERA over 11 starts during the pandemic-shortened season for Seattle and Toronto, which acquired him Aug. 27 for a player to be named, who became outfielder prospect Alberto Rodriguez.

With the Mets now having a front four of deGrom, Carrasco, Stroman, and Walker, rounding out the rotation will likely be David Peterson or Joey Lucchesi, and it should be Peterson's spot to lose given how he performed in 2020 during his rookie season.

Peterson was the Mets' second-most reliable starting pitcher in 2020 after deGrom, posting a 3.44 ERA and 1.20 WHIP while striking out 40 batters in 49.2 innings.

When it comes to depth, the Mets are much-improved there, with Jordan Yamamoto among the rotation options beyond Peterson or Lucchesi should they suffer any injuries.

Heading into next offseason, the Mets' rotation should be in good shape could be in a bit of flux.

Under team control will be deGrom, Carrasco, Walker, Peterson, and Lucchesi. But both Stroman and Syndergaard are set to be free agents.

If Syndergaard looks like his old self after returning this season, the Mets should be very interested in exploring a long-term deal with him. And a look at the starting pitchers set to hit free agency after the 2021 season makes a reunion with Syndergaard even more appealing.

Beyond Lance McCullers Jr., the most notable starting pitchers expected to be free agents before the 2022 season are Max Scherzer (who will be 37 years old) and Clayton Kershaw (who will be 34 years old and is already pondering retirement).

The Mets could also possibly go the trade route, with Sonny Gray and Luis Castillo among the options if the Cincinnati Reds decide to move one or both of them.

One problem the Mets currently have is that they don't have any impact starting pitching prospects who project as being ready for 2022, but that could change in 2023.

DeGrom has the ability to opt out of his deal after the 2022 season, which he recently discussed (if deGrom doesn't opt out, the Mets have control over him through 2024). No matter what, it will be a surprise if the Mets don't find a way to make deGrom a Met for life.

So it should be expected that their rotation in 2023 will again have deGrom at the top. Carrasco could still be here, too, with the Mets holding a $14 million option on him (the option automatically vests if he throws 170 or more innings in 2022).

Tinian students receive badminton equipment

TINIAN—Northern Marianas Badminton Association donated equipment to Tinian students as part of its continued efforts to introduce the sport in schools.

NMBA general secretary Cristy Villaflor and national team players Nate Guerrero, Nicole Malasarte, Jordan and Janelle Pangilinan, and Ezekiel and Daniel Macario turned over 10 rackets and two sets of shuttlecock tubes each to Tinian Elementary School and Tinian Junior Senior High School early this month.

Dionne Santos, principal of Tinian Junior Senior High School, received the donation on behalf of the Stallions and Tinian Elementary School principal Lou Connie Manglona. Some Tinian Junior Senior High School joined Santos at the donation turnover ceremony last Feb. 6, as the event coincided with the Shuttle Time session that NMBA conducted at the Tinian Youth Center in San Jose.

"We're extremely grateful to NMBA for this donation and for giving our students and our youth the opportunity to learn a new sport. We've been playing softball, baseball, basketball, and soccer here and the more sports we play, the better for our youth. We hope that this donation and the clinic [Shuttle Time] that NMBA conducted will kick start the potential of badminton on Tinian," Santos said.

NMBA, through Badminton Oceania and Badminton World Federation, donated the equipment about a week after face-to-face classes resumed on the island, so Manglona said the timing is perfect.

"The donation of rackets and shuttlecocks from NMBA will greatly enhance our offerings of sports activities here at Tinian Elementary School. Our first grade teacher, Celina Farrell, an avid badminton player, was excited to see we have equipment for the sport. She has taken the lead to coach badminton to her first graders and offer an after-school badminton program," Manglona said.

"We hope to continue this collaboration and see more opportunities for the association to offer more Shuttle Time to our students and our staff. From our Colts family, we thank the NMBA," she added.

Fourth grader Emmanuel Cruz, one of the students that attended Shuttle Time, said that with NMBA's donation, his classmates and friends who missed the badminton clinic, will have a chance to play in school.

"We can play together and I can show them how to hit the shuttlecock," Cruz said.

Meanwhile, NMBA president Merlie Tolentino thanked Badminton Oceania and Badminton World Federation for supporting their efforts to offer badminton to students from all three islands. She added that making badminton as an after-school program or including the sport in physical education classes does not only give NMBA and the CNMI the opportunity to discover and develop talents, but also encourages children to stay healthy and active. ***(PR)***

Tinian Junior Senior High School principal Dionne Santos, standing third left, is joined by some of their students and parents for a group photo during the donation turnover ceremony of badminton equipment for Tinian schools early this month in San Jose, Tinian. Also in the photo is Northern Marianas Badminton Association general secretary Cristy Villaflor. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

CNMI national player Daniel Macario, right, teaches Emmanuel Cruz how to properly hold a badminton racket during a Shuttle Time session on Tinian early this month. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

GCA

From Page 20

The Lady Dolphins were first pitted against Mt. Carmel School 1, which downed Saipan International School, 21-10. MHS 1 went on to top MCS 1, 21-6, to move to the second round against GCA 1. The Tyce Mister-coached MHS 1 also prevailed over GCA 1, 21-17, to reach the winner's bracket semifinal round and face GCA 2.

Before meeting MHS 1 for the first finals berth, GCA 2 dominated MHS 2, 21-9, and then outclassed SIS 1, 21-10. The Lady Eagles then kept their winning ways and advanced to the championship game ahead of MHS 1 after sweeping their semis match, 21-9, 21-15.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Grace Christian Academy 2's Audrey Castro receives a serve at the backline.

MHS 1 after being stunned by GCA 2 dropped to the loser's bracket and had to face Tinian High School to get a second crack at the Lady Eagles. The semis tiff in the loser's bracket was also a best-of-three match with MHS 1 eliminating Tinian, 21-18, 21-15.

The eventual runner-up team took just a few minutes of rest after ousting Tinian and then returned to the sand court to challenge GCA 2, which held a twice-to-beat advantage in the title match because of its unbeaten record going into the finals.

The good rest before the championship game, according to Libut, definitely worked for his players.

"MHS 1 had to play two more sets before they reached the finals, so that really gave us an advantage and our players capitalized. They realized MHS 1 players are tired, so in every possession, their plan was to have their opponents run after the ball," said Libut, adding that although they won via straight sets and were not force to play in Game 2, MHS 1 gave them a good fight.

The Lady Dolphins did threaten to extend the finale when it made one final push for a comeback in the second set. With GCA 2 just a point away from clinching the title, 20-15, Fatima Monterubio went up to the net with her spike with the ball landing on the empty backline, moving the Lady Dolphins within four, 16-20.

MHS 1 scored anew in the next possession off Aiko Rasiang's ace, 20-17. The Lady Dolphins retained possession with Rasiang serving anew. GCA 2 managed to receive the serve and set up Hye Jin Elliot for the spike, which was then handled well by MHS 2. The Lady Dolphins then tried to counter with Madeleen Narciso setting up Monterubio, but the latter's shot went short, ending MHS 1's title hopes and allowing the Lady Eagles to extend their reign in the girls high school volleyball competition.

Marianas High School 1's Nathanette Blas attempts a return near the net during the second set of their title game against Grace Christian Academy 2 in the 2020-2021 Public School System Interscholastic 4v4 Beach Volleyball League last Saturday at the Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan sand courts. ROSELYN B. MONROYO

NMI

From Page 20

All these achievements, according to Zapanta, are made possible by the assistance and support NMIFA got and have been getting from AFC, East Asian Football Federation, Guam FA, Japan FA, and Korea FA, as well as the entire NMI community.

Meanwhile, Paire Football Club official and former NMIFA Executive Committee member Patricia Coleman sees NMI soccer story appearing on FIFA.com as a boost to the NMI's bid for FIFA membership.

"I believe this is the first time that FIFA has featured NMIFA in an article. This helps to demonstrate that we are on their radar and making progress towards NMIFA's goal of one day being a full member of FIFA," Coleman said.

Men's national team player Sunjoon Tenorio was also excited to see NMI's story on FIFA's official new site.

"I think the story and us being recognized even in the small sense is big for us and it is promising to see that we are being recognized even if it is just an article. It is very exciting time for NMIFA and all players and coaches and we should be motivated by it," said Tenorio.

For the full details of the featured article, check https://www.fifa.com/news/northern-mariana-islands-looking-to-make-a-splash.

Heat hold off depleted Lakers in finals rematch

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Sports

One Grand Slam at a time for Osaka

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GCA 2 clinches v-ball title

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
roselyn_monroyo@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

A different playing surface could not deny Grace Christian Academy's volleyball players from winning another championship.

GCA 2 went unbeaten in the 2020-2021 Public School System Interscholastic 4v4 Beach Volleyball League over the weekend to bag the girls high school division crown in the 12-team competition. Katriel Saures, Soleil Lamar, Hye Jin Elliot, Audrey Castro, and Vicky Wang played for GCA 2 and they clinched the title after sweeping Marianas High School 1 in Game 1 of the finals, 21-15, 21-17, last Saturday.

The championship was fourth in a row for the Eagles with the first three in indoor tournaments and the recent one at the sand court of the Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan last weekend.

"It's was tough for the girls playing in a sand court. But, this (volleyball) is their passion, so they just had to work harder to get the results they're aiming for," said GCA coach Cesar Libut moments after finishing off the No. 1 seed MHS 1.

MHS 1 entered the playoff round with a perfect 9-0 record to take the top seeding, while GCA 2 was seeded second with its 8-1 mark. Both teams drew a bye in the opening round of the playoffs last Friday and did not play their first game until last Saturday.

See GCA on Page 19

Grace Christian Academy coach Cesar Libut and GCA 1 and 2 players gesture, indicating the four titles that they won in volleyball. ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Grace Christian Academy 2's Hye Jin Elliot goes for an overhand serve during the second set of their title game against Marianas High School 1 in the 2020-2021 Public School System Interscholastic 4v4 Beach Volleyball League last Saturday at the Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan sand courts. ROSELYN B. MONROYO

A screen grab from FIFA.com shows a feature story on NMI soccer and the aerial shot of the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

NMI soccer featured in FIFA news site

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
roselyn_monroyo@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Federation Internationale de Football Association's official news website recognized NMI soccer's milestones through a feature story that appeared on FIFA.com last Friday.

The article entitled "Northern Mariana Islands looking to make a splash" mentioned the full membership status that the Commonwealth through the Northern Mariana Islands Football Association received from the Asian Football Confederation—one of the six confederations within FIFA.

The story also took note of how the NMI, despite being a small island and having limited resources, "have long been working hard on making their own impact on the football world" through the establishment and strengthening of its grassroots and men's, women's, and junior national team programs, and the availability of a training facility and proper venues for games.

NMIFA executive director Russell Zapanta, who was interviewed for the story, also shared how players' participation to the program has consistently grown.

"It'll take time and patience to have a competitive adult team as our program transitions through generations. But gone are the days when the organization had to scramble a team, recruiting and begging kids from other sports to make up what would be a junior national team," Zapanta was quoted as saying in the featured article.

See NMI on Page 19